

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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MEDITATIONS

ON

The Mysteries of Faith and the Epistles and Gospels

For Each Day and the Principal Feasts of the Year.

BY A MONK OF SEPT-FONTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY THE RELIGIOUS OF THE VISITATION,
OF WILMINGTON, DEL.

REVISED AND EDITED BY
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"Thy law is my meditation." (Ps. cxviii, 77.)

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NOTE OF THE EDITOR.

BESIDES substituting a meditation on the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi instead of that given by the author, the editor has taken the liberty of adapting to the wants of all using them the meditations for the Feast and Octave of St. Francis de Sales.

First Sunday after Pentecost.

Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

I. POINT.

“There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One.” (1 John V, 7.)

Thus does St. John, who had drawn the truth from its source, the very bosom of Jesus, express the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. To-day we celebrate this ineffable mystery; but the best and only means to render it our homage, is to revere and adore it in humble silence. To wish to penetrate it would be to dishonor it: it is infinitely above our weak intelligence. Let us, then, believe with simplicity, and confess with firm faith, what the Holy Ghost teaches us concerning it, and what the Church explains to us: A God thrice holy (Is. VI, 3), the only true God, in three distinct Persons, but co-eternal and perfectly equal in power, in greatness, in majesty, in wisdom and in goodness, who have one only and identical divinity, one only and identical essence, and who differ only by their personal properties. The Father begets the Son, by the way of understanding; the Father and the Son produce the Holy Ghost by the way of love, and these divine productions last forever, and are permanent and eternal in God, like Himself, who never had a beginning, and will never have an end. Oh, God in three Persons, higher than heaven, deeper than hell, more extended than the world, and wider than the universe by Thy immensity! God, ineffable to our tongues, incomprehensible to our minds,

and invisible to our eyes! Considering Thee, I exclaim with the prophet: "Ah, ah, ah, Lord God; behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child" (Jer. I, 6). Yes, adoration, love and thanksgiving are due to Thee, O adorable and merciful God! May I thank Thee unceasingly, and may I love Thee, in order to render Thee a worship worthy of Thee!

II. POINT.

There is but one Lord, "one God and Father of all" (Eph. IV, 6). We must honor the unity of God in the Trinity of Persons, by the union of all our faculties, of all our powers in one single desire, the desire of loving and serving the one God; we must offer a singular love, a heart without division to this only Object, worthy of all our worship and all our affections. God is one and singular in Himself, alone infinite, alone perfect, alone holy, separated from all that is imperfect, finding in Himself alone His beatitude and glory. The unity of God which we ought to adore, is not incompatible with the ineffable society of the three Divine Persons. But since God has vouchsafed to communicate Himself in the production of His creatures, He wishes to find in our hearts a kind of solitude. It is especially when He visits us in holy Communion, that He draws us powerfully to Himself by a universal detachment, and says to us, as to Abraham: "Walk before Me, and be perfect" (Gen. XVII, 1); that is, regard only Me, think only of Me, be occupied only with My presence, and you will be perfect. O God, who art sufficient for Thyself, grant that I may be satisfied with Thee alone. St. Augustine says that he is too avaricious, to whom God is not sufficient.

III. POINT.

Baptize all nations "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. XXVIII.

19). We have been created by the most holy Trinity. God, before making man, did not say: I will make; but: "Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. I, 26), to show that the three Divine Persons contributed equally to his formation, and, breathing into him the breath of life, they imprinted in him a divine character. We must, then, acknowledge and love the most holy Trinity as the source of all our goods, and respect in ourselves the features of its divine likeness. But, alas! sin has so disfigured this image in us, that no trace of it would remain, if He who formed it had not undertaken to repair it; for the redemption is, no less than the creation, the work of the most holy Trinity. Let us not fear to say that it is God's master-piece. Therefore baptism, by which the redemption is communicated to us, is conferred upon us in the name of the Blessed Trinity, by the express order and institution of Jesus Christ. In it the image of God is re-traced, engraved anew in our souls. Oh! with what care should we preserve it! With what zeal should we add to it every day some new feature, by the practice of the virtues, according to the exhortation of Jesus and His apostle: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children" (Eph. V, 1). "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat. V, 48).

Monday after Trinity Sunday.

God the Father.

I. POINT.

God the Father, the first Person of the most blessed Trinity, is called the source of the divinity, because He is its principle, and from all eternity He begets His Son, co-eternal and consubstantial with Himself, true God, and one same God with Him. "The Word was with

God" (John I, 1), says St. John, and it is from the only-begotten Son Himself, who is in the bosom of the Father, that we have learned it. O great God, first source of all created beings and of divine emanations, be the source of all my conduct! Let no one else have a share in my works; may they be directed by Thee alone and for Thy greater glory! Holy Father, "of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. III, 15), who is like unto Thee? Men give to their children only a portion of their being, and we, the works of the hand of God, hold all from Him. "It is He, who hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. XCIX, 3). We hold our being doubly from Him, first by creation, and then by preservation; for if He ceased for a single moment to concur in the continuation of our existence and to sustain us, we should fall back into the nothing from which He drew us. How do we so often dare, then, to use against Him that which we hold only from Him! Why do we not employ for Him all the capacity of our being, which has power only by its actual dependence on Him! O injustice, O perfidy, O ingratitude which we ought to detest and punish in ourselves! O my God, I depend upon Thee necessarily; I wish to depend upon Thee voluntarily, and to make all that Thou hast given me, all that I am, and all that I have, serve for Thy love.

II. POINT.

"Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. I, 3). God from all eternity is the Father of Jesus. In time, from the moment of His Incarnation, He is His God, and He received more glory from this great Adorer than from all creatures together. It is in view of His merits, that He adopted for His children

those whom the Son deigned to make His brethren. He is the Father of Jesus, God by the eternal generation; He is the Father of Jesus, Man-God in virtue of the hypostatic union; but for us He is Father and God of all consolation through grace and mercy. What a favor, what an eminent dignity to have one same God, and one same Father as Jesus! That we should be permitted to call God our Father (Rom. VIII, 15), since He has predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (Rom. VIII, 29), that is, that He has called us to His divine sonship (St. Chrysostom). He receives us with Jesus to the communication of the heavenly inheritance, that we may be the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. VIII, 17); by adopting us He makes us partakers of His spirit, of His grace and of His divine nature. O Holy Father, who hast exalted us to such high glory, who hast for us the goodness of a father! Give us hearts docile, tender and faithful, full of love and filial gratitude to Thee.

III. POINT.

“His name is Almighty” (Exod. XV, 3). Almighty power is in God a perfection especially attributed to the Father, as well as all the works which are its effects; therefore we say in the Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. “He spoke, and all things were made; He commanded, and they were created” (Ps. CXLVIII, 5). We owe to Him a duty of gratitude, because of all that He has done for us, for He made all things for man: but He made man for Himself alone. We owe to Him unreserved submission; His will is the supreme rule of our life and destiny; finally, we owe to Him boundless confidence. By His sweet providence He disposes all for our good, He foresees our needs, and with a goodness equal to His

power, He provides for them liberally. O God, Thy providence governs all things. What shall I render to Thee, Lord, for all Thy benefits (Ps. CXV, 12), but above all for having made me for Thee and for Thyself alone? May I no longer live, if I do not live for Thee! May I learn from inanimate creatures to obey Thee! They never transgressed Thy laws; and the limits which Thou hast prescribed for them, they observe them exactly; they always persevere in the state in which Thou hast established them (Ps. CXVIII, 90). May I humble myself under Thy hand, as adorable when it smites and afflicts me, as when it lavishes its gifts upon me; since life and death, poverty and riches come alike from Thee (Eccli. XI, 14). How just, how good Thou art in all that Thou dost! (Dan. III, 27). How straight are Thy paths, how equitable are Thy judgments!

Tuesday after Trinity Sunday.

God the Son.

I. POINT.

The second Person of the most holy Trinity is the only-begotten Son of God the Father, His Eternal Word and His Word before all time. In the beginning was the Word; interior in God Himself, the Word was in God, substantial, uncreated, and God Himself; the Word was God, and by Him all things were made. Living, and the living source of life, in Him was life. We have life, and it is only by Him that we possess anything, "for without Him nothing was made of all that is made" (John I, 3). But what would the natural life profit us without that of grace? We have this life of grace also only from Him. We receive it of His abundance, because "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John I, 14). Because "the life

eternal, which was with the Father, hath appeared to us" (1 John I, 2), to communicate Himself to us. He says of Himself: "I am the Life" (John XIV, 6). He is so entirely the life, that even His death is life and the source of life, since His precious death is the cause and the merit of life, grace and glory for us. O Jesus, unite me to Thee; "receive me according to Thy word, and I shall live" (Ps. CXVIII, 116). I fear not death which is to separate my soul from my body, but I fear, above all, that which can separate me from Thee, who art my life; from Thee, without whom I should fall into the only fatal and irreparable death; for there is no death or condemnation for them who are in Thee (Rom. VIII, 1).

II. POINT.

The Son of God is called the glory and the splendor of the Father (Heb. I, 3), for as the splendor of the sun is as ancient as the sun itself whence it proceeds, so the Son is co-eternal with the Father, and glorifies Him by showing forth all His divine perfections. He accomplished this admirably by the mystery of the Incarnation. All creatures together were not capable of rendering to God a glory worthy of His greatness. The Word became man, that in our nature He might glorify Him worthily, and, moreover, in His life He accommodated Himself to us, and made Himself heard by all, in order to make us know, adore and love the Father. But, O wonder! the Word speaks to nature, and everything obeys Him, and this same Word, incarnate for us, speaks, cries aloud, suffers and dies, and men to whom He speaks and for whom He dies, will neither listen to Him nor obey Him! O adorable Word, eternal Light, who didst shine in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not (John I, 5), enable my

heart to see, hear and follow Thee! O splendor of the Father, grant us grace to imitate Thee! May we be Thy splendor by glorifying Thee and honoring Thee every moment of our life and through the countless ages of eternity!

III. POINT.

The Son of God is called "the image of the invisible God" (Col. I, 15), because God from all eternity begot a Son perfectly equal and like unto Himself in essence, in holiness, and in all His infinite perfections. But, O unheard of charity of this same Son, who hides His splendor and abases His majesty even to the likeness of sinful man, even to the form of a servant and a slave! —an invention of love which could be imagined and executed only by Jesus, the uncreated wisdom. He made Himself then like unto men (Phil. II, 7), to raise men to the likeness of God; He made Himself a model visible to men, that they might not excuse themselves from following and imitating Him. He is the essential wisdom which cannot be deceived; He is goodness itself, desiring only our good; He is the Almighty, who sustains us and gives us grace and strength to imitate Him. Let us not fear to go astray in following Him, for He is "the Light of the world" (John VIII, 12); he who follows Him, walks not in darkness. O Jesus, who art the living image of the Father, imprint in us the image of Thy holiness, of Thy humility, of Thy obedience, of Thy charity and all Thy virtues!

Wednesday after Trinity Sunday.

God the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

The Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, is God with the Father and the Son, equally

wise, powerful and good, and proceeding from both, in unity of principle as their spirit and their love. God the Father is a spirit, He is holy; God the Son is equally a spirit and holy; but these two qualities are more especially attributed to the Third Person, because He is the essential love of the Father and the Son: it is the property of this love to sanctify souls by elevating them to God. The Holy Ghost is the source of all created holiness; therefore He is called the sanctifying Spirit, and the remission of sins, the justification of souls, and the infusion of the virtues are also attributed to Him. O Holy Ghost, come to sanctify our hearts, and consecrate them to be worthy temples of Thy majesty. O Divine Love, inflame us. As the life and happiness of God consist in the knowledge and love of His perfections, so our life and our beatitude consist in knowing and loving God; this is eternal life that we know Thee, who art "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John XVII, 3). O exaltation of the creature, to have one same end, one same life, and one same happiness with God Himself! Woe to us, if having it in our power to be happy with the happiness of God even in this life, we unworthily seek our happiness in the vain and profane knowledge of the world, and in the love of earthly and created goods!

II. POINT.

The Holy Ghost as love, personal in God, is the bond and indivisible unity of the Father and the Son. In the Incarnation, in which the human nature is bound and united to the Divine Word, it is still the Holy Ghost who makes this union, the master-piece of the divine charity towards us. Finally, this same Spirit comes into us to unite us to God, drawing us, and attaching

us by the sacred chains of His love: I will draw them by the bonds of charity (Osee XI, 4), says God by His prophet, that is, by the grace and unction of the Holy Ghost. "Charity", says St. Paul, "is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who hath been given to us" (Rom. V, 5), and who makes us love God and our brethren for the love of God, uniting us to Him by love, submission, and the union of our will with His, and to our neighbor by concord, holy friendship and fraternal charity; for wherever the Holy Ghost is, there we find peace and union of hearts, there is fulfilled the "new commandment" of Jesus: "Love one another, as I have loved you; by this shall men know that you are My disciples" (John XIII, 34 and 35). O adorable Spirit, form in us this twofold love, ardent towards God through love for Him, beneficent towards our fellow-men through love of God, and in Him and for Him.

III. POINT.

The Holy Ghost is called "the Spirit of Truth" (John XIV, 17), because, according to the promise of Jesus, He instructs us, and by His light dissipates the darkness of our ignorance; and because, while showing us the right way, He strengthens us to follow it. "Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land" (Ps. CXLII, 10). The good Spirit is called the "Comforter" (John XIV, 26), because He comforts and sustains souls by His divine unction, sweetens and lightens the yoke of the commandments, the practice of which He renders easy and agreeable, so that this saying of Jesus is verified: "My yoke is sweet, and My burden light" (Mat. XI, 30). The Holy Ghost engraves the divine law in our hearts in characters of fire and love, and therefore He is also called the "Finger of God" (Luke XI, 20). He writes not upon tables of stone, but upon

the fleshy tablets of our hearts (2 Cor. III, 3), a law which is no longer like the Old Law, a law of fear, of threats, of severity, but a New Law, which is grace and love. The Old Law was given amid thunder and lightning, and the terrified people exclaimed: "Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die" (Exod. XX, 19). The New Law is given amid fire and flames; but they are fires of love, which make us love this law and say: Let all men be silent, and mayst Thou alone speak to me, O Lord, I will listen to what the Lord God shall speak to my heart (Ps. LXXXIV, 9).

Feast of Corpus Christi.

Reasons of the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

I. POINT.

Jesus "having loved His own, He loved them to the end". (John XIII, 1.)

Let us contemplate on this day and penetrate, if possible, the secret designs of Jesus in the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, His love, the ardent zeal of His heart for the glory of His Father and our salvation; and the other marvels hidden in the ineffable mystery of His august Sacrament. He is there as a victim to be sacrificed; as food to be eaten; as sovereign King to be adored. The first motive of the Son of God in becoming man, was to honor God worthily; and, wishing that He should be glorified by us in the same manner, He has made us partakers of His priesthood; He has made us priests to our God (Apoc. V, 10). He places Himself in our hands, that, offering Him to God, we may render to Him, by Him and with Him, the homage, the worship and glory due to His majesty and greatness. Receive, O Holy Father, this living Victim, holy, immaculate, in acknowledgment of Thy supreme,

infinite and almighty Being. I am nothing, I have nothing that is worthy of Thee, and yet I owe Thee all; but with Jesus who gives Himself to me, and by Him I am enabled to render to Thee all that I owe.

II. POINT.

Jesus, not content to place Himself in our hands as a treasure by which we offer to God a tribute and a glory worthy of Him, wishes to enter even into our hearts, and becomes our bread, our food. As the natural life is sustained by material bread, so the life of grace, which is all divine, has God Himself for its daily nourishment. I am come, says Jesus, "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John X, 10). He has come into the world to bring us the first life, which excludes the death of sin; from the altar He comes into us not only to preserve to us this life, but to give it to us still more abundantly. O admirable invention of the Eternal Wisdom! O good Jesus, come to preserve, nourish and increase Thy divine life in me! As food sustains and strengthens us, and prevents us from dying, so Thy sacred flesh preserves me from the corruption and death of sin; it sustains me in my trials by the hope of a future happiness, which it enables me to enjoy in anticipation, and of which it is a certain pledge; it strengthens me in the way of this mortal life, that I may walk with courage even to the mountain of God (3 Kings XIX, 8). The Lord formerly gave a miraculous food to those who feared Him, when He rained down the manna (Ps. LXXVII, 24), called the "bread of angels" (Ps. LXXVII, 25), and the "bread from heaven" (Exod. XVI, 4); and therefore David calls Him merciful. But how shall we call Thee, O Lord, who dost give us the true heavenly bread with which the angels are in-

visibly nourished, and which is the life and delight of the saints in heaven and on earth. O precious food, given to those who fear (Ps. CX, 5) and love God; food which is not for one nation only, nor for a time, but for all times and for all the children of God throughout the whole world! O goodness, O mercy of Jesus, with which the whole earth is filled! O Lord, "Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens" (Ps. VIII, 2), for the gift which Thou dost bestow upon us is worth more than heaven and earth, with all that they contain. It is the happiness and glory of earth and heaven.

III. POINT.

Jesus dwells upon our altars, there to be adored as God, loved as a Saviour, and obeyed as a king; in these characters He lives and reigns in the midst of us. He was prefigured by the Ark of the Covenant, from which God pronounced His oracles, listened to the prayers of His people, and received their homage; for Jesus on the altar guides our souls, inspires us to do His will, and receives our submission and respect. Jesus has two kingdoms, the one of glory, the other of mercy: as King of glory, He is seated, reigning at the right hand of the Father; as King of mercy, He has established His throne on our altars: and there He beholds us, pours His favors upon us, shows forth His goodness, His clemency, His liberality. Let us go, then, let us approach this throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find favor and assistance in our needs; let us submit to Jesus our King all that we are; let us eat of this bread which is the delight of kings (Gen. XLIX, 20), that is, of those who rule their passions, subjecting them to Him, and who rise above the world and all the things of earth.

Friday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

I. POINT.

As often as you shall do this, do it "for the commemoration of Me." (1 Cor. XI, 24.)

Jesus, on the eve of the day when He was to suffer and immolate Himself on the cross, wished to institute the Sacrament of the Altar, to represent His sacrifice and to perpetuate it even to the end of ages, and to offer to God, with His own hands, the pure and priceless victim of His most holy body, before delivering it to the cruelty of the executioners, and making it a propitiation for our sins. All the former sacrifices had been symbols and figures of this mystery; they referred to it, and derived from it their power, their efficacy and their holiness; therefore David said, in the name of all the sacrificers of the Synagogue: O God, our Protector! "Look on the face of Thy Christ" (Ps. LXXXIII, 10); by this immolated victim, which will be offered to Thee upon Thy altars, behold and accept our offerings. The fulness of time having come, the Son of God, on entering into this world, said to His Father: The sacrifices and holocausts of the Old Law were not pleasing to Thee; but "Thou hast fitted to Me a body", that I Myself may be Thy victim (Heb. X, 5). The Blessed Sacrament is, then, not only the end, but also the perfection and consummation of all the other sacrifices; and because none of the ancient sacrifices could be received by God, except as a sign and a very gross image of this one, no offering in the New Law could be pleasing to God and worthy of Him, if not united to this adorable Victim. Offer yourselves to God, says St. Paul, as victims living and holy (Rom. XII, 1);

but victims are holy only in as much as they are united to Jesus immolated and sacrificed by the offering of His body, which He made once to God in a bloody manner, and daily renews on our altars as the perpetual Sacrifice of the New Law.

II. POINT.

“As often as you shall eat this bread, you shall show forth the death of the Lord” (1 Cor. XI, 26). The Sacrifice of the Altar is a living image of that of the Cross. Jesus is there also really present, although more hidden. The Cross had hidden only Thy divine essence, O my God, exclaims St. Thomas, but in Thy Sacrament all Thy Sacred Person is concealed from our eyes. Jesus thus hidden and contained in the inanimate species, represents to us His death; and the two different and separate species of the bread and wine represent to us the real separation of His blood from His body on the cross. On the cross Jesus was exposed as a sign of contradiction, “set for the fall and the resurrection of many” (Luke II, 34); and in the Blessed Sacrament He delivers Himself to the good and the wicked; He is the life of the former and the death of the latter; He is honored and glorified by the former, He is blasphemed and crucified afresh in the hearts of the latter. O Jesus, source of life in Thyself, who dost cause death only with reluctance, may I die a thousand times rather than stifle Thy divine life in my soul. Wash me in the precious Blood which Thou didst shed for me on the cross, and recover, O Lord, in my heart the life which Thou didst sacrifice on Calvary, since Thou didst die there only to live in me, and to make me live in Thee and for Thee.

III. POINT.

As in former times by the order of God the manna

was preserved in the Ark of the Covenant, in a golden vessel (Exod. XVI, 33; Heb. IX, 4), so the efficacy and the merits of the sufferings and death of Jesus are contained in the August Sacrament, to be poured into us from their very source. Jesus on the cross suffered for us all without exception, and became the price of our redemption; but this was not enough for His love; He comes to place this precious price, this inestimable treasure in the hands of each one of us, that, becoming our possession, we may be enriched by it and pay all our debts. The blood of Jesus shed upon the cross is of infinite value; it is sufficient to wash away all the sins of the whole world: but the sprinkling and the application of this same blood are made upon us at the altar and in holy Communion, where it is given to us to purify us abundantly from all our stains, and to inebriate us in a holy manner with love for Him, who poured it out for us. Oh, if we knew "the gift of God"! (John IV, 10). If we could comprehend the excellence of the graces contained in this Sacrament! But that we may receive them in their fulness, let us bring to Jesus, in His state of death for us, a mortified body, an immolated heart, a submissive spirit, passions dead and crucified.

Saturday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

Dispositions for holy Communion.

I. POINT.

"Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of this Bread." (1 Cor. XI, 28.)

The holiness of this divine Bread demands holy and divine dispositions; therefore, St. Paul orders us to sound and purify our hearts. Faith should first be established therein; for faith is the foundation of piety;

it causes us to humble ourselves profoundly in the presence of Jesus; it excites us to render Him the homage of an humble admiration, because it gives us a full and firm conviction, that He who comes to us, is the very same God whom the angels contemplate in trembling, and whom they dare not look upon with unveiled faces, because of the splendor and majesty of His divine countenance; it is He whom the saints adore unceasingly in heaven, and who is the Sovereign Lord of the world. From this consideration of the greatness of Jesús arises the consciousness of our lowliness, and regret for our offences. Who art Thou, Lord, and who am I? Would a whole eternity be sufficient to sound the depth of the infinite difference between Thy holiness and my iniquity, Thy perfection and my misery? May I humble myself in proportion to the infinite difference between Thee and me, "who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. XVIII, 27), who "am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter" into my heart (Mat. VIII, 8), who do not deserve to lift my eyes to Thee, and to occupy the lowest place in Thy house. The Church wonders that Thou didst not abhor to enter the womb of the purest of virgins, and how should I dare to receive Thee into my heart? "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke V, 8). But is it not for that very reason, O Lord, that I should approach Thee? It is true, that I am only as a mere nothing, and a rebellious one, a wretched sinner; but my soul is pierced with sorrow for having offended Thee; and to whom shall I go, to whom shall I fly, if not to Thee, my God, who alone art holy and who alone canst render me just and holy?

II. POINT.

Jesus, called the "desire of the everlasting hills" (Gen. XLIX, 26), ought to be longed for with the sighs

of a soul languishing and hungering for the heavenly bread. Where is the sick man who does not call for his physician, the poor man who does not go to meet the generous rich man, the captive who does not implore his deliverer? How, then, shall not all our desires be directed towards our Saviour, towards Jesus, who holds for us the place of all, and who is the source of all good? Why do we not say incessantly with David: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God", source and fountain of life (Ps. XLI, 2). I think of Thee, O Lord, and I desire Thee from the break of day (Ps. LXII, 2). But when we possess this treasure, this wonderful good, this incomparable friend, let us close the door of our heart, that nothing may enter with Him, that He may occupy it entirely, and that, alone with Him, we may pour out our soul in His presence. He loves solitude; and as in former times Joseph dismissed all the Egyptians (Gen. XLV, 1), when he wished to make himself known to his brethren; as God Himself ordered that neither beasts nor men should be found upon the mountain where He was to treat with Moses (Exod. XIX, 13), so Jesus wishes to find us alone, free from human thoughts and affections, to manifest Himself to us, and to listen to us favorably; this is the proper time to make known to Him our secrets, to complain to Him of not loving Him enough, to conjure Him by that infinite love which He shows us in this Sacrament, to give us a reciprocal, tender and faithful love for Him. What heart would not be softened and moved by Thy incomprehensible love, O my God!

III. POINT.

We must go to meet Jesus with good works: "Labor", says He, "not for the meat which perisheth,

but for that which endureth unto eternal life" (John VI, 27); if any man does not work, neither let him eat (2 Thes. III, 10). Let us strive to prove and purify our souls; let us carefully expel therefrom sin and the tumult of passions; let us labor to destroy them and subject them to Jesus; let us make earnest and constant resolutions to walk with fervor in the way of God, to resign ourselves to His will, however difficult it may appear to acquire virtue; for, to receive the King of glory worthily, it is not enough to purify the place of His abode, we must also adorn and decorate it with all that can please Him, that He may take His delight in us: "My delight", says He, "is to be with the children of men" (Prov. VIII, 31); but He takes pleasure only in hearts in which He finds conformity with His own; in hearts meek, patient, humble, obedient, detached from the world and themselves; in hearts that wish to live only to God. Finally, the manna, which was the figure of this divine food, was preserved in a golden vessel, enclosed in the Ark all lined with gold, to teach us that we must receive this sacred Bread in hearts clothed with gold, that is, enriched with that burning charity, which all the wealth of the world can not purchase, and which is the only real treasure of man.

Second Sunday after Pentecost.

The Divine Banquet.

I. POINT.

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many."
(Luke XIV, 16.)

The Holy Eucharist is the banquet of the Sovereign King, the true Father of the family, Jesus Christ our Lord. As king Assuerus made a great festival to display the riches of his kingdom (Esth. V, 4), so Jesus

Christ gives a great supper in which He displays the treasures of His almighty power, wisdom and goodness. His goodness wishes it and demands it, His wisdom prepares and orders it, His power accomplishes it. This power shines forth in the miracles which Jesus, "mighty in works and words" (Luke XXIV, 19), performs there every day, so much the more admirably, as they are wrought upon a subject more worthy; for it is no longer upon nothing, as in the creation, nor upon heaven, the earth and the elements, nor upon the dust, as in the resurrection of the dead, but upon the glorious and sacred Body of Jesus. Here God obeys the voice of man, a sinner (Jos. X, 14). He comes and presents Himself at the word of the priest, who bears everywhere with him the authority over God Himself. O wonderful power and love of God! O prodigy of His goodness! exclaims St. Chrysostom. He, who is seated at the right hand of God, is at the same time in our hands to give Himself to all who wish to receive Him. What a motive for charity! What a model of obedience! O Jesus, obedient throughout Thy whole life, Thou dost wish even in Thy glory to perpetuate Thy obedience on earth; Thou remainest or ceaseest to be present, at the pleasure and according to the will of Thy creatures. May Thy obedience destroy my rebellion, may it render me docile to follow Thy commandments, and subject me to all for love of Thee.

II. POINT.

The characteristic of the goodness of Jesus is to pour itself forth and to communicate itself; thus, in His wisdom, He preserves the unity of His Body, and although the species are broken and separated, it remains undivided. He multiplies the presence of His Body, always one and indivisible, so that there are

everywhere consecrated Hosts, and all may receive Him as really as if He were but for one alone. May I imitate Thee, O Jesus, doing good to all, making myself all to all, to win them all to Thee (1 Cor. IX, 22), and with the sole intention of glorifying and pleasing Thee. By another miracle, the body of Jesus is truly present, more brilliant than the sun, without, however, being visible to our eyes; it is real, yet it is not tangible and it occupies no space. O Jesus, who art in the Father, "who dost dwell in light inaccessible" (1 Tim. VI, 16), and who dost conceal Thyself in this Sacrament! Grant that I may conceal myself with Thee and for Thee, that I may love to live unknown to the world, to be known only to Thee, and to know and love only Thee; may I contemplate Thee here with the eyes of faith, that I may one day see Thee face to face and possess Thee forever.

III. POINT.

Finally, everything is miraculous in the Blessed Sacrament: the body of Jesus is not subject to change; if the species become corrupt, His body does not undergo corruption, but He ceases to be present; He is the Immaculate Lamb, who remains always living and entire, although His holy flesh is eaten by the people. A single one receives Him, a thousand receive Him, and, being received by all, He is never divided or consumed; the substance of the bread is changed into the body of Jesus, and the wine into His blood: only the accidents remain, sustained by power from on high, which gives them virtue to nourish and to produce the same effects as their substance, although certainly it no longer exists. O admirable conversion! Image of what ought to take place in us in holy Communion, in which we ought to be entirely changed into Jesus Christ; as to the exterior

we remain the same, but in the interior we ought to be entirely transformed into Him. O Lord, may I no longer be myself, may I no longer live for myself, but for Thee, who didst say: "He that eateth My flesh, shall abide in Me, and I in him" (John VI, 57). O Jesus, where is the monarch who has ever made so sumptuous a banquet! Where is the shepherd who gives himself as food to his sheep, the father or the mother to the children, the king to his subjects? It belongs only to Thee, O Lord, our Divine King, our Father and our Shepherd, to nourish us thus at the altar with Thyself and Thy own substance.

Monday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

Holy Communion, the food of our souls.

I. POINT.

*"I am the living bread that came down from heaven;
if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."*

(John VI, 51.)

Material bread sustains the life of the body for a time, but the bread which Jesus gives us at the altar, being living, spiritual and heavenly, communicates to us a life spiritual, immortal and divine. The life of the body continues so long as it remains united to the soul; the life of the soul continues so long as it remains united to God. The body is living only by the soul, and the soul has life and health only in as much as it is animated, guided and directed by the spirit of God: it is to form, to strengthen and perfect this union, which is our life, that Jesus becomes our bread. In this Sacrament He is for us a source of life: a life of grace, of love and union with God here below; a life of glory, of love and perfect happiness in heaven. O Jesus, living and vivifying bread! Come and communicate to

me this life of grace and love, unite me inseparably to Thee, be the soul of my soul, and the spring of all my motions; in nourishing me with Thy sacred and sanctifying flesh, communicate to me Thy spirit; may I live henceforth only in Thee and for Thee: live and reign in me forever.

II. POINT.

“As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, shall live by Me” (John VI, 58). The bread that Jesus gives us—His sacred body—not only sustains and nourishes in us the life of grace, but is also a germ, as well as a pledge, of eternal life, of a glorious resurrection, and, in anticipation, the rich and great recompense of our labors, and a foretaste of our eternal beatitude. We possess Him, we see Him, although through the clouds of faith, but in the expectation of one day contemplating Him “face to face”, unveiled, and enjoying Him fully in heaven. How greatly should our faith, our hope, our charity be animated by this divine Sacrament! Jesus said: “Unless you see miracles, you will not believe” (John IV, 48); but what great, what numerous and surprising miracles here confirm the most wavering faith! In truth, where is he, who, receiving Jesus with a sincere heart in holy Communion, has not experienced the virtue of His promises, has not felt the truth of His real presence, has not tasted true sweetness in its source, has not seen and felt, by his spiritual senses, that the Lord is sweet? (Ps. XXXIII, 9). Could He not say to us as to St. Thomas: “Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed”? (John XX, 29).

III. POINT.

Our hope is not less strengthened, when we possess Jesus as the pledge of our salvation and of our eternal life: a precious pledge which contains in itself all that

is greatest, most holy and most worthy in eternal life, in future glory, all that constitutes its perfect beatitude; for in this beatitude does God give us anything more perfect than Himself? He gives Himself to us in this Sacrament: how shall He not with Himself give us all things? (Rom. VIII, 32), The fruit is his to whom the tree belongs. If, then, Jesus, the source of all the gifts of nature, of grace and glory, gives Himself to us, have we not a right to hope that He will not refuse us these same gifts? With what ardor, then, should not our charity be inflamed towards such a Benefactor? With what love should we not receive that which love alone makes Him give to us! If Thou didst depend upon men, O Lord, if Thou hadst need of them to be happy, couldst Thou engage them by a present more magnificent, by means stronger and more powerful! But Thou art God, and Thou hast no need of me (Ps. XV, 2); it is I, who have need of Thee, and the profusion with which Thou dost bestow Thy gifts, is the pure effect of Thy charity and mercy. O Jesus, may my heart, filled with gratitude, be consumed in the chaste and divine flames of Thy love.

Tuesday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

Effects of Holy Communion.

I. POINT.

The Incarnation and the Eucharist are two admirable works of divine Wisdom. God being unable to suffer, and man being unable to make satisfaction, God became man to unite infinite dignity to passibility, that by this means divine justice might be fully satisfied; such is the work of the Incarnation. It is a work no less marvellous, when the Man-God conceals Himself under the species of bread, to accommodate Him-

self to our weakness, so that the senses perceive only bread, and that we may therein receive God Himself. As mothers nourish their children with their milk formed from their blood and their own substance, so Jesus, wishing to nourish and vivify our souls by His sacred flesh, and as if to enrich them with His own substance, clothes Himself with the species and appearances of an ordinary food; but He says to us, as He said to St. Augustine: I shall not be changed into you, but you will be changed into Me. But if the qualities of food pass into the body which is nourished with it, how is it that, eating the deified body, we are not entirely transformed into God? Whence comes it that we do not participate more in His humility, modesty, meekness, charity and all His other virtues?

II. POINT.

In the Incarnation God abased Himself to us; by the Eucharist He elevates us to Himself, communicating Himself to us with His merits and graces. In the Incarnation He made Himself our brother; in the Eucharist He unites Himself not to our own nature only, but to our own persons; not to a single individual, but to all, to each individually. He makes our bodies the temples of His divinity, our hearts the altars of His holy love, and our minds the thrones of His grace and of the Holy Ghost. Therefore this Sacrament is called an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation; in the latter, at the word of Mary, God descended into her womb; the other mystery is accomplished, when at the voice of the priest, who pronounces in the name of Jesus these words: "This is My Body" (Mat. XXVI, 26), Jesus Christ is actually in his hands, and passes from them into our hearts. O wonderful extent of the charity of Jesus, by which He gives Him-

self to all, with all His treasures! O Lord, may all give themselves to Thee without reserve, with all that they have! Can they do less, to correspond to Thy love? We give Thee thanks that, having taken human nature from us, Thou dost restore it to us with usury, having deified it in Thyself and in a manner so suitable, that Thy wisdom could find none more worthy of Thee, nor more favorable for us.

III. POINT.

God in the Incarnation assumed our nature; He united Himself to it hypostatically, never more to be separated from it: so that forever God will be Man, and Man-God in one and the same person. It was not expedient that the Man-God should remain always on earth; it was only a passage for Him; and after having accomplished our salvation, heaven was to be His kingdom and abode: but His love urging Him not to leave men, who needed His presence, His wisdom found a wonderful means not to abandon them: "Behold I am with you all days until the consummation of the world" (Mat. XXVIII, 20); and it is by this adorable mystery that He wishes to be still a traveler with us, and the companion of our pilgrimage even to the end. He wishes to assist us in our dangers, to enlighten us in our doubts, to support us in our trials; He wishes as a divine sun to dissipate our darkness, to warm us with His love, to make our hearts fruitful in virtues; He wishes, finally, to be our Viaticum until He has guided us to the secure haven of our heavenly country. O God, who, by Thy excessive goodness, and according to Thy promise, dost vouchsafe to dwell in the midst of us, grant that our temples, which contain Thee, may be for us a true haven, where we shall make Thy praises resound day and night, and where with the angels, who

descend there in multitudes, we shall pour forth canticles of love and thanksgiving; may all our delights be, there to render Thee our homage and our veneration! With what astonishment and gratitude should we exclaim with the wisest of kings, "Is it credible that God should dwell with men on the earth?" (2 Par. VI, 18).

Wednesday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.

What holy Communion enables us to do.

I. POINT.

We have no more powerful means than the Blessed Eucharist to render to God all that we owe to Him; for if we could collect together all the merits of the angels and saints, all their charity, all their virtues and good works, all this would be far beneath the glory which we procure to God by a single holy Communion, because, uniting ourselves in it to Jesus Christ, and possessing Him so intimately, it is no longer by ourselves, but in Him and by Him that we glorify God. In holy Communion we glorify God by Him, who is called, by way of eminence, "the glory of God" (Rom. III, 23), and whose least action and least suffering gave greater glory to the Father, than will be given to Him throughout an endless eternity by all the just and the blessed. It is also through Jesus alone, that we can worthily thank God and acknowledge His benefits; and, as Jesus is never more entirely ours, than in the precious moments when He nourishes us with His Body, there is no time more appropriate for us to discharge all the debt we owe to God. This Sacrament is therefore called Eucharist, which signifies thanksgiving. "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He hath rendered to me? I will take the cup of salvation" (Ps. CXV, 12). I am

too unworthy, O Lord, I am too poor to pay or acknowledge Thy least gifts; yet I dare to say that I will pay them all abundantly, and even the greatest of all, which is Thy Son, since He Himself becomes, by Thy immense liberality, my possession and my treasure, and it is He whom I offer to Thee this day.

II. POINT.

If we are already indebted to the goodness of God because of His benefits, our abuse of them, our ingratitude, our innumerable sins render us no less indebted to His justice. But, alas! where shall we find means to discharge so many debts? Our tears, our penances, even if continued during our whole life, could not worthily expiate a single one of our sins. Man will not save man, "the brother shall not redeem his brother" (Ps. XLVIII, 8); it is only a Man-God, Jesus Christ our Lord, who can make satisfaction for us, only His merits can appease God. The merits of Jesus Christ, it is true, are applied to us by the sacraments, which impart grace to us; but Christ's merits are given to us, they become our property, they belong to us in holy Communion, in which we receive the very Author of grace: therefore we may say that one single Communion has more power to purify us from our sins, than all the labors and mortifications of the most austere penance, because it is that of Jesus Himself which we offer to God. May I confess, then, O Lord, that I am loaded with immense debts to Thee, and that I have not wherewith to pay! I am insolvent; but have a little patience, I will go to the altar, there I shall receive Jesus, and then I will pay Thee all" (Mat. XVIII, 29). What do I say? I will pay Thee with usury, offering Thee this same Jesus, all His merits, and all His blood; for a single drop of His precious blood is sufficient to efface

all the sins of the whole world; moreover, what I present to Thee, O Lord, is my own, for what is more mine own than what Thou Thyself hast given to me?

III. POINT.

We are poor, indigent, and without merits to obtain what we need; but, through the Sacrifice of the Altar, and when we possess Jesus in holy Communion, what ought we not to hope for? If the Father gives us His beloved Son, will He refuse us what we ask in His name? Will Jesus, who gives Himself to us, refuse us His gifts? If, then, we are sick, let us go to Him to ask for help, He is our remedy as well as our food; if we are weak and languid, He is our strength; if we are blind, if we groan, captives under the yoke of sin and chained by our passions, He is our deliverer; if we are tempted, He will conquer in us and for us; and when we feel the approach of death, He is "the resurrection and the life" (John XI, 25); if we are indigent, destitute of virtue, He will give us His; if we are without merits, He will labor in us and by us to acquire them, He will cover us with His own, that, being clothed as with a garment of good odor, we may obtain the blessing of our heavenly Father. O holy Father, we have deserved only Thy malediction and Thy chastisements; but "look upon (us in) the face of Thy Christ" (Ps. LXXXIII, 10); look upon us covered with the precious garments of Thy only Son, our divine Brother; forget what we have done, and remember only what He has done; vouchsafe through Him to hear us favorably, and receive us into the bosom of Thy mercy.

Thursday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.**The Real Presence.****I. POINT.**

Jesus is called a "hidden God and Saviour".

(Is. XLV, 15.)

He was hidden from all eternity in the bosom of His Father; and "who shall declare His generation?" (Is. LIII, 8). He was hidden in His holy humanity in the womb of His mother; finally, He is hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, where His humanity and His divinity are concealed under visible species, and therefore He is called a "hidden Manna" (Apoc. II, 17); but if we raise the veil, what marvels shall we not perceive? First, the body of Jesus is truly present by virtue of the words of consecration. This body, formed by the Holy Ghost in Mary, and which issued from her virginal womb; this body which was seen on earth, from which "a virtue went forth which healed all the sick" (Luke VI, 19); this body which was fastened to the cross, there to be the price of our salvation, which was laid in the sepulchre, which rose again and ascended glorious into heaven, and which will be the eternal object of the beatitude of our bodies and our senses: it is this same body that we adore, which we receive and eat at the altar. "O ye heavens, be astonished at this" wonder! (Jer. II, 12). O most holy body of Jesus, source of all purity, purify and sanctify my flesh and my heart!

II. POINT.

In this Sacrament the soul of Jesus is also present, united to His body: that soul which, by the unction of the divinity, is sanctified, and is itself sanctifying; which, from the moment of its creation, enjoyed the blessed vision of God; which in the Passion was "sorrowful even unto death" (Mark XIV, 34), in which

was mingled extreme sadness with supreme joy; that deified soul, which, descending into Limbo, changed its prison into a paradise and filled those ancient captives with perfect happiness: it is this same soul which comes to animate and vivify ours in holy Communion. O most holy soul, sanctuary of God, who dost possess all the treasures of the virtues, the graces, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost! Pour upon me of Thy abundance, communicate to me Thy divine inspirations, clothe me with Thy virtues, and as Thou didst not remain a single moment without loving and glorifying God, without enjoying Him, grant that my soul may be constantly attentive to Thee, occupied with Thee, penetrated with Thy love; and may it act only for Thy glory; make it by Thy presence a heaven where Thy praises may re-echo without interruption, and where at all times Thou mayst be adored and loved.

III. POINT.

In virtue of the hypostatic union, the Divine Word, the true Son of God, is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, and with Him the three Persons of the most Holy Trinity, according to these words of our Lord: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word; We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him" (John XIV, 23). O admirable abode of God in us, which is accomplished in holy Communion! There we possess the Blessed Trinity, whom the angels adore, whom the powers contemplate in trembling, before whom the seraphim veil their faces with fear and awe. Adoration, reverence of these heavenly spirits, which it behooves us to imitate when we approach this august Sacrament! For then we should humble ourselves, annihilate ourselves as far as we can, and yet elevate ourselves to Jesus, through Him to love and glorify the

Blessed Trinity, to become the seraphim of the earth, to be all burning with the love of God made man, who became, through His excessive charity, our bread and our nourishment. O great and secret mysteries contained in this awful Sacrament! O Saviour God, mercifully hidden, since Thou dost conceal Thyself only to save us more efficaciously, grant that we may seek to hide ourselves with Thee, and to withdraw from the eyes of the world to co-operate with Thee for our salvation, that in the day of Thy manifestation we may merit to participate in Thy glory.

Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi.

Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Motives for loving the Sacred Heart and confiding in it.

The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of the incarnate Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Being the consubstantial image of the Father, according to His divine nature, our Saviour possesses all perfections in Himself. He is meek, patient, generous, charitable, not as the saints are, but to an infinite degree, "because", says St. Paul, "in Him it hath well pleased (the Father), that all fulness should dwell" (Col. I, 19). Does not such a Heart deserve all our love? We love creatures, in which we find united nobility, grandeur, goodness, fortune, generosity; how much, then, should we love the Creator Himself, who infinitely possesses all these qualities, and is their inexhaustible source! When we love that which is earthly, we bind our affections to a vain and transitory shadow; why should we not rather unite ourselves to the uncreated beauty, which is everlasting and capable of making us forever happy? Let us, then, allow ourselves, like the angels

and saints, to be ravished by the ineffable charms of the Heart of our God, that Heart, which should inspire us with confidence, since it is the Heart of Jesus Christ, the Head of the regenerated human race. From Him proceeds the life of the Church and of souls; in Him are found united all the benefits of the redemption; from Him flow beneficent streams, bringing to souls hope and life. With what mercy He purifies sinners, with what love He enlightens, strengthens and consoles the just, and gives them the help necessary for their progress! Would it be in vain, that He calls Himself our Brother, whose interest it is to provide honorably for His brethren? When Joseph was placed over Egypt, he endowed his relatives with the most fertile part of the country. Our Lord, far more generous, has promised His graces to all who pray, even if they were the greatest criminals. "Every one that asketh, receiveth" (Luke XI, 10). How much will He not give to His friends! Let us, then, go with confidence to the Heart of this good Master; if we have wants, we should state them to Him; if we have wounds, let us show them to Him, and He will wash them in His blood. If we are weak, let us ask Him for strength; if we are poor, destitute of every spiritual good, if we are troubled with dryness and distractions in prayer, in spite of our efforts to keep recollected, let us humbly implore His assistance, saying: "O Jesus, the resurrection and the life, enlighten my mind, purify my heart, raise up my dejected spirit; impart to me Thy holy inclinations, enable me to live constantly with Thee, in Thee and for Thee."

II. POINT.

Graces to be drawn from the Sacred Heart.

We should first draw from it the knowledge of

God, more precious than all temporal goods, for it is the root of eternal bliss, as our Lord Himself says: "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John XVII, 3). "Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory that he understandeth and knoweth Me" (Jer. IX, 23, 24). But in the Heart of Jesus, according to St. Paul, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. II, 3). These treasures Christ cheerfully imparts to the little and the humble of heart (Mat. XI, 25). If we wish to be more enlightened than the scientists of this world, let us be devout to the Heart of Jesus, but in such a manner, that we may love an humble and hidden life, a life of recollection and prayer. By this means we shall gradually attain the perfection of sacred love, of which the Heart of Jesus is the focus, since it is the incarnation of uncreated charity, for "God is charity" (1 John IV, 8). "I am come", says our Lord, "to send fire upon the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke XII, 19). And our loving Saviour kindles this fire in our hearts in holy Communion and in our visits to Him on our altars and in the tabernacles of His love, where He dwells day and night for our salvation. But we shall in vain pretend to be inflamed with holy love, if our heart is all saturated with self-love and the love of creatures. Let us, then, firmly resolve to mortify our senses, and specially our eyes, so that we may always live under the gaze of Jesus, and to repress our imagination in its wanderings, and to subject our passions to the Saviour's yoke.—O adorable Heart, Thou esteemest so little the goods of

this world, as to leave them even to Thy enemies, but Thou reservest the goods of heaven for Thy friends. Through the intercession of Mary most holy, impart to me of Thy wisdom and holiness; of Thy wisdom, that I may better understand Thy grandeur and my nothingness; of Thy holiness, that I may become detached from the world and conformable to Thy desires, to Thy sentiments and Thy virtues.

Saturday after the Octave of Corpus Christi.

God will treat us as we treat our neighbor.

I. POINT.

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned; forgive, and you shall be forgiven” (Luke VI, 37).

Jesus forbids us to judge our brethren, and to induce us to shun such judgments more carefully, He appeals to our own interests. “It is the Lord, who judgeth me,” says St. Paul (1 Cor. IV, 4). He, who thinks seriously that he is exposed to the eyes of God, whose scrutiny nothing escapes, who counts and weighs all our actions to give us their just price, and who will “judge even justices” (Ps. LXXIV, 2), thinks rather of reforming his own conduct than of condemning that of others, of anticipating his judge by the compunction of his heart, than of blighting the reputation of his neighbor. The pharisee who condemned the humble publican, was himself condemned by God, and the publican who acknowledged himself a sinner, without condemning the presumptuous pharisee, was, on the contrary, justified (Luke XVIII, 14). Let us, then, not constitute ourselves judges of our brethren, lest we ourselves should be judged and condemned by them at the tribunal of God. Let us forget the evil and the

wrongs that they have done us, if we wish God to forget our sins and all that we have done against Him. O divine clemency, which puts in our hands so easy a means of pardon and mercy, and which demands so little from us to pay so great a debt!

II. POINT.

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again” (Luke VI, 38). It depends, then, only upon us to be abundantly enriched with eternal goods; for Jesus sets no limits to His liberality, except those which we ourselves place. It belongs to us, by the right that He gives us, to prescribe to Him the measure; we have only to use for others the same as we would wish others to use for us. But what an invention of the wisdom and goodness of Jesus, to excite us to practise charity and mercy towards our brethren! How greatly He must love and desire to see this virtue in us, since He makes it the price of His most precious gifts, even of gifts which cost Him His blood and His life. Alas, Lord! with what zeal and fidelity should I employ the goods which Thou dost give me, to find grace before Thee, and to have a share in Thy favors, for I am indigent and poor, and I have a pressing need of all Thy mercies.

III. POINT.

“Cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou shalt see to cast out the mote from thy brother’s eye” (Mat. VII, 5). Jesus opens our eyes to perceive an evil which we commit very often without scruple. Contrary to the prohibition of God, we have two measures and two weights (Prov. XX, 10), the one for ourselves, the other for our neighbor. That which appears to us in the neighbor a disorder, a crime deserving

punishment, seems to us in ourselves only a slight fault, an imprudence, a weakness worthy of excuse and pardon. We judge ill of the intentions of others, we blame them upon the least appearance of evil, we condemn them severely, whilst we ourselves are deserving of a greater condemnation. Such a disposition alone renders us more guilty than our neighbor. Jesus prescribes fraternal correction (Mat. XVIII, 15), but what wise precautions, what secrecy does He not demand! We willingly excuse ourselves from this duty, because we prefer to blame our neighbor publicly, and to wound his reputation by our malicious words. The shadow of a slander which falls upon us, alarms us and makes us lose peace and charity, and we accuse others of an unjust severity, when they deservedly reprove us for our faults. If injuries and the most unkind treatment draw from our neighbor some words of complaint and murmur, there is no wrong that we would hesitate to impute to him to exculpate ourselves. We wish for the property of others, and we call him a miser who is not lavish with his goods. Grant, O my God, that we may enter into ourselves, and say, when we are tempted to condemn our neighbor: "Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone" (John VIII, 7). For me, an unworthy sinner, full of miseries, I wish to know how to reprove, accuse and condemn myself, because it is written that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" by God (1 Cor. XI, 31).

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ's kindness towards sinners.

I. POINT.

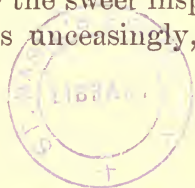
"The publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear Him." (Luke XV, 1.)

And they went away changed, converted, justified. So Magdalen, loaded with sins, threw herself at the feet

of the Saviour, and she immediately became humble, penitent, all burning with divine love; for this is the testimony which Jesus Himself rendered to her, and from His mouth she merited to receive this eulogy: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke VII, 47). "O change wrought by the right hand of the Most High!" (Ps. LXXVI, 11). O miracle of the Saviour God, which He alone can accomplish! It is not so natural to the sun to warm and enlighten the world, as it is to Jesus to destroy sin in sinners, to purify and sanctify souls by the power of His spirit and the efficacy of His grace. It is He who changes wolves into lambs, who renders the hearts of proud and haughty men humble and docile, and who from vessels of iniquity makes them sanctuaries of purity. Convert me, Lord; purify me from my crimes, wash from me the sins that I have committed: this is the miracle which I implore, and which I hope for from Thy mercy.

II. POINT.

"Sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him." Blessed is he, who approaches Jesus, and who approaches Him to listen to Him! For He is the light of the blind, the liberty of captives, the consolation of the afflicted, the health of the sick, refuge in temptation, peace in disquietude, strength in weakness. The sinner will find in Him mercy, the criminal his pardon, and the just man the preservation and increase of his justice and his sanctification. Let him who is just go to Him to be justified still, and him who is holy, to be sanctified more and more (Apoc. XXII, 11). Finally, Jesus is all to all, to show mercy to all. O Jesus, who dost come first to me by the sweet inspirations of Thy grace, who dost say to us unceasingly, in the depths of our



hearts, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Mat. XI, 28); grant that I may respond to Thy voice, that I may approach Thee to find consolation and strength. Deign to unite me to Thy sacred and vivifying humanity in holy Communion; for in it especially I desire to approach Thee and to hear Thy divine lessons.

III. POINT.

There is this difference between the Old and the New Law; God formerly destroyed sinners, to destroy sin, as happened in the deluge, the burning of Sodom, and among the idolatrous nations of the country of Canaan, who were exterminated, that Israel might take possession of that land. Thus God, in His wrath, continues to punish the devils and the damned in hell; there He punishes them for their sins with an eternal death. On the contrary, the advantage of the law of grace and love is to destroy the sin while saving sinners. This advantage is the proper effect of the coming and the presence of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away, who effaces the sins of the world by His clemency and grace, and pardons without delay the contrite and sincerely penitent heart. O Jesus, "reprove me not in Thy indignation, chastise me not in Thy wrath" (Ps. VI, 2); destroy, exterminate my sins, and save my soul. "As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps. LXVII, 3), not to be lost, but to cease to be sinners, to be converted, to become just and holy.

Monday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

Value of sufferings.

I. POINT.

*"Be you humbled under the mighty hand of God, that
He may exalt you in the time of visitation."*

(1 Peter V, 6.)

The pride and vanity of man, says the Holy Ghost, precede his fall (Prov. XVI, 18); but by the abasement and humiliation of his heart he moves God to raise him up, to fix His eyes upon him, to give him His protection and grace. The door which leads to life is low (Mat. VII, 14). Jesus Christ abased His greatness to pass through it the first; how could we hope to pass through it with our foolish pride! He smoothed the narrow way; He made His sufferings and His humiliations the path to His rest and glory. Could man be so rash as to expect to reach heaven by any other way? If Jesus, the God of glory, entered into His glory only through sorrows and opprobrium, shall man dare to hope to attain to it by pleasures and honors? "Think diligently upon Him," says St. Paul, "that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds, for you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebr. XII, 3, 4); "if we suffer with Him, we shall live also with Him" (2 Tim. II, 12). "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. IV, 13).

II. POINT.

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you" (1 Pet. V, 10). All the saints, all the

friends of God, in the expectation of the goods to come, have despised alike the prosperity and adversity of this world. The longest and most cruel sufferings appeared to them light, when they considered the recompense prepared for their fidelity, and the crowns that they were to acquire by their combat. They knew that "the Lord chastiseth him, whom He loveth" (Heb. XII, 6); and that He receives no one among the number of His children, without making him feel His indignation for sin; that he who wishes to enter into the inheritance, must be submissive to the correction of his Father: therefore they walked with a firm step in the rough and thorny way, which leads to the blessed city, the foundations of which are immovable, and of which God is the builder and architect. There they are now "in-ebriated with the torrent of Thy delights", O Lord (Ps. XXXV, 9); there they are in possession of that happiness, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive; what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (Is. LXIV, 4, and 1 Cor. II, 9). May the expectation of that happiness enable me not only to bear the miseries of life with patience, but may it inspire me to desire them, to seek them, to love them.

III. POINT.

"After you have suffered a little, God will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you" (1 Pet. V, 10). If the sufferings of this life, however hard and painful they may be, disappear in view of the great recompense which is to crown them, what shall we say when comparing the short moments of their duration with that endless eternity which succeeds them! An eternity which is without end, as its days are without night, its pleasures unchanging and without

weariness. All this life is as a day which soon passes, as the eve which precedes that great and triumphant festival, that glorious solemnity in heaven, where the praises of God resound without interruption. If the fasts and the labors of the eve seem to us long and difficult, let us compare them with the length and felicity of that perpetual day which will succeed them, and let us exclaim with St. Paul: "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is prepared for us. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (Rom. VIII, 18, and 2 Cor. IV, 17).

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

Trust in God, vigilance and faith.

I. POINT.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you."
(1 Pet. V, 7.)

Our uneasiness is vain, our cares are useless: we often fear where there is nothing to fear (Ps. LII, 6); we apprehend evils which will perhaps never happen, and we repose in security in the midst of real dangers, because we are equally blind and powerless. "Which of you", says our Lord, "by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" (Mat. VI, 27). Let us, then, follow the counsel of the apostle, let us leave all to Him, who is all powerful, who sees and knows all our needs; "He that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. CXX, 4). He is not subject to sleep, and it is He who takes care of us, who assures us that, although a mother may forget her child, He will never forget us, because He bears us written in His hands (Is. XLIX, 15, 6). He guides us, instructs us, and

keeps us as the apple of His eye (Deut. XXXII, 10). It is, then, advantageous for me to attach myself to Thee, O my God, and to place all my hope in Thee; for no one, who has put his confidence in Thy mercy, has ever been confounded (Eccli. II, 11).

II. POINT.

“Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. V, 8). Confidence in God would become presumptuous and rash, if not accompanied by humble vigilance. Therefore St. Peter does not separate these two things: “Be sober and watch”. Be sober, abstain from all sin, use moderately the goods of this world, be contented with little, do not give to your desires and passions all that they demand. Sinners, weighed down by their riches, fall asleep, says the prophet, and at their awakening they find nothing in their hands. There is no vigilance without sobriety: be therefore sober, that you may be able to watch, and watch, because a powerful and artful enemy is always watching for your ruin; but his artifices cannot surprise him, who, sober, temperate, detached from all, watches over himself constantly, to close all the avenues of his heart. The power of the enemy is nought against him who labors faithfully, and places all his confidence in God.

III. POINT.

“Resist him, being strong in faith” (1 Pet. V, 9). Faith is the shield of the Christian, says St. Paul: take in hand, says he, the impenetrable shield of faith to repel the enemy (Eph. VI, 17). This enemy has at all times persecuted the servants of God, but he was conquered by their faith; “the victory which overcometh the world, is our faith” (1 John V, 4). By faith Abra-

ham, to obey God, undertook to sacrifice his only son; by faith Moses chose rather to be afflicted with the children of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; he preferred the opprobrium of Jesus Christ to the treasures of the Egyptians; he suffered adversity, as if he had seen Him who is invisible, because he considered the reward. Finally, by faith the saints have conquered the powers, have endured mockery and scourges, chains and prisons; "they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they lived poor, afflicted, wandering on the mountains, in deserts and in caves of the earth" (Heb. XI, 37); therefore they now reap with joy the fruit of their faith: "they rest from their labors, because their works have followed them" (Apoc. XIV, 13).

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

The divine holiness, goodness and mercy towards sinners.

I. POINT.

"Sinners drew near to Jesus" (Luke XV, 1).

We ought to adore in God three eternal perfections: His holiness, His goodness, His mercy. God, by His holiness, is infinitely removed from all that is imperfect, and from all stain or appearance of sin; He would have destroyed the whole world at the fall of the first man, if the Eternal Word had not presented Himself to be clothed with our flesh, and to bear in it all the severity of the divine holiness, by which He was smitten, afflicted and humbled on the cross; for God did not spare in the Holy of holies the appearance of sin. Therefore, man's soul separated from the body, seeing more clearly the divine holiness, would prefer to precipitate herself into hell, rather than appear in the presence of God stained

with any remnant of sin. The divine holiness is a weight which oppresses her, which crushes her and drives her from His sight. How, then, shall the sinner approach God in the Sacrament of His Sacred Body, without fear of being one day cast violently into the abyss of eternal fire?

II. POINT.

If the holiness of God rejects the sinner, because His eyes can not behold iniquity, His goodness, which is no less opposed to sin, destroys it wherever it exists, yet finds the means to separate the sinner from the sin; and, having exterminated the sin, Mercy calls the sinner, shows him his errors, and exciting him to a just hatred of what he has unjustly loved, changes the corruption of his heart into compunction and grace. Through the infinite goodness the soul feels the presence of Jesus, and says to herself what Martha said to her sister: "the Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John XI, 28); or else what God Himself said to Abraham: "Go forth from thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house" (Gen. XII, 1), and walk before Me, that is, go out from thyself, from the land of thy former habits and thy vicious inclinations, go to the land which Jesus shall show to thee, to follow the motions of His spirit, to obey the inspirations of His grace, and while the light is offered to thee, believe and follow this light (John XII, 36), lest it be taken away from thee, and thou fall back into the darkness. O Jesus, may the abyss of Thy goodness behold and call the abyss of my misery (Ps. XLI, 8); may I hear Thy voice and follow it according to Thy words: "All that are in the graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (John V, 28).

III. POINT.

"No one cometh to Me", says Jesus, "unless the

Father draw him" (John VI, 44). The goodness of God attracts the sinner, His mercy receives him. The prodigal, interiorly drawn by the remembrance of the goodness of his father, said within himself: "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke XV, 18); and as soon as his father saw him, moved with compassion and joy, he received him, embraced him, and loaded him with favors. So, the publicans and sinners, drawn by the goodness of Jesus, approached Him, and Jesus, full of paternal mercy and a desire for their salvation, received them, and did not disdain to converse and eat with them, in order to win them to God. Let them still come to Jesus, let them come by penance, hatred of sin, sorrow for having so often offended a Father so loving! Let them approach Him by a true conversion of their hearts, let them withdraw from creatures, to turn all their affections towards their Creator, and Jesus will receive them; He will clothe them with the nuptial garment of His graces and merits. O Jesus, I come to Thee, because Thou hast called me: receive me, "according to Thy word, and I shall live; confound me not in my hope" (Ps. CXVIII, 116).

Thursday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

The Good Shepherd.

I. POINT.

"The scribes and pharisees murmured against Jesus, saying: He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."
(Luke XV, 2.)

Had not Jesus Christ sufficiently shown His love for men, by becoming man like them, and suffering the hardships of this life, to acquire for them the happiness of the other life? Yet, to excite our confidence, He wished to manifest often, in the Gospel, His burning

and eager zeal, His ardent desire for our salvation; therefore He compares Himself to a shepherd, who seeks his sheep, at the expense of his repose and life, and He assures us that He came, not to judge and condemn the world, but to procure for it life and salvation; that He came, not to destroy souls, but to save them (Luke XIX, 10). Consequently, notwithstanding the contempt, the murmurs of the pharisees, very far from repulsing sinners and sending them away, He calls them and eats with them; He declares that it is for them that He came down from heaven; He says: "they who are well, need not a physician, but they who are sick" (Mark II, 17). O Jesus, divine Shepherd, incomparable Physician! Thou who dost make Thyself the remedy and the food of Thy sick and hungry sheep, moved by the infinite tenderness of Thy heart, I venture this day to approach Thy Altar. O Lord, what will become of me, if Thou dost send me away, if Thou dost forbid me to approach Thee! Thou art all my health, my resurrection and my life.

II. POINT.

We who are strong, should bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom. XV, 1). Jesus Christ, the perfect model of meekness, teaches us not to despise any one, to win sinners by our prayers and good example, by our compassion and our regard for them. St. Paul says: "Let every one of you please his neighbor unto good, to edification" (Rom. XV, 2). He adds: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, instruct him in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. VI, 1). We are all sinners, and we all need indulgence and pardon: but if we have already obtained it by the tears of penance, let us now shed them for the salvation of others; for they are our brethren, and we

are redeemed by the same precious Blood. May the thought of their errors, far from irritating us against them, or making us think better of ourselves, recall to us the remembrance of our own sins and the mercy of God, who has preserved us from corruption; instead of condemning them, let us blush at our own faults and weaknesses, and let us bless God, whose hand has strengthened us; finally, "let us bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. VI, 2).

III. POINT.

"The angels of God rejoice in heaven over one sinner doing penance" (Luke XV, 10). If Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls, rejoices when, having found the sheep that was lost, He brings it back upon His shoulders, that is, when He converts the sinner and sustains him, aids him, consoles him and introduces him by penance into the haven of salvation; if His friends, who are the just, if the angels themselves share in this divine and ineffable joy, what should be the sentiments of the converted sinner at the thought of this joy which his conversion causes in heaven, on earth, in the hearts of the saints, of the angels and of God Himself? What consolation, what peace, what lively and humble gratitude should penetrate this soul! What love, what tender respect, what faithful attachment should he conceive for his deliverer, considering the great distance between them! He should, says St. Gregory, repair his past faults with great fervor by redoubling his virtues; for he to whom more is forgiven, should love more (Luke VII, 47), and it is, no doubt, for this reason, that the Shepherd rejoices more over the sheep that is found, than over the ninety-nine that went not astray (Mat. XVIII, 13). O God, how admirable, how compassionate is Thy mercy!

Friday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ's love for the sinner.

I. POINT.

The Gospel shows us an infinite mercy in the Heart of Jesus. In fact, if there had been but one sinner to save, a single stray sheep to bring back to the fold, a single lost drachma to find, it would have been a sufficient motive for His coming into the world, for His life and for His death. Therefore St. Paul says: "He delivered Himself for me," (Gal. I, 4): as if he attributed to himself alone all the fruit of Christ's Passion. Now, every one may have the same sentiment, and may think with truth, that the salvation of his soul alone was a sufficient motive for God to become man, to suffer and to die; for, as the sun shines equally for all and for each individual, as Jesus in the Eucharist is received entire by all, and entire by each one, so He came for the salvation of all in general and for the sanctification of each individual sinner. Who will not acknowledge himself a sinner, and who consequently may not say: He has loved me, He came for me, He suffered and died for me. O Jesus, I owe myself entirely to Thee, because Thou didst give Thyself entirely for me, and entirely to me; I am indebted to Thee for all the mysteries of Thy holy life, as if they had been accomplished for me alone.

II. POINT.

Jesus did not become an angel to save angels; but He became a man to save men: and what men? He said: "I came not to call the just, but sinners" (Mat. IX, 13). It seems that He came only for them; He compares Himself to a shepherd who leaving ninety-nine sheep, goes to seek the one that was lost, that is,

the sinner, — until having found it, he places it on his shoulders, and returns triumphant to his house; from this we learn that the justification of sinners is the recompense of the labors, and the fruit of the cross and Passion of Jesus. O burning and merciful zeal, which consumes His soul for our conversion and salvation! All His examples, all His parables show in Him only desire, labor and love: and as Joseph sent by his father, and questioned as to whom he was seeking, answered: “I seek my brethren” (Gen. XXXVII, 16); so, O Jesus, in all the journeys, all the labors of Thy life, Thou didst seek only sinners, Thou didst not disdain to “call them brethren” (Heb. II, 11). Lord, who didst weary Thyself in seeking my erring soul, grant that she may allow herself to be found, and may be docile to Thy voice; may she, in her turn, seek Thee, and may she find Thee, never more to stray from Thee, never more be separated from Thee!

III. POINT.

“There shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, than over ninety-nine just, who need not penance” (Luke XV, 7). There are two ways to go to heaven, innocence and penance. The first way was that of the angels, the other is that of men, who, though purified in the waters of baptism, always need in this life to have recourse to the waters of penance; and in this sense, this Sacrament is called by St. Augustine the second plank after shipwreck. We give Thee thanks, O Jesus, that thou hast provided us with so salutary a remedy for our miseries, and so secure a means to return to Thy favor. Sweet penance! which more than repairs the innocence which we had lost, penance which accomplishes the greatest work of Jesus, the conversion of sinners, which renders His Passion

efficacious in their behalf, which sanctifies souls, robs hell, increases the merits of the Church, gives joy to the angels, and glorifies the most Holy Trinity.

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Pentecost.

Necessity of Sufferings.

I. POINT.

“Humble thyself under the mighty hand of God.”
(*I Pet. V, 6.*)

The children of God always and everywhere have endured many persecutions.

Sufferings were the portion of Jesus Christ our Head: His members must resemble Him. If you think that you should be exempt from suffering, you have not yet begun to be a Christian. Does not St. Paul assure us that all who wish to live in a holy manner and like Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecution? He regards these trials as so necessarily the portion of the saints and an advantage, that he wrote to the first Christians: “It is given to you not only to believe in Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for Him” (Phil. I. 29). Tribulation ought not then to abate our courage; it ought, on the contrary, to increase and animate it; for it forces from the heart crushed, afflicted and humbled under the hand of the Almighty, the precious wine of patience, which produces trial, and trial produces hope, which is never confounded (Rom. V, 3).

II. POINT

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. St. Francis de Sales says: Afflictions regarded in themselves may terrify, but considered in the will of God, which is their origin, become sweet and delicious. Let us not look at the instrument that wounds us, nor the visible hand that smites us; let us adore that of God,

which turns both according to His pleasure, and makes use of them, either to punish and correct, or to try and to purify His servants as "gold in the crucible" (Wis. III, 6), and to render them worthy of Himself; let it suffice for us to know that nothing happens in this world without His order or permission. All things are guided by Providence, and nothing happens by chance, as the wicked think. God does all for the welfare of His elect (Rom. VIII, 28); He makes all things turn to the advantage of those who love Him: let us respect His absolute power, acknowledging that He uses it only with mercy, and let us submit to His just dispensations, however severe they may appear, saying with David: "I opened not my mouth, because Thou, O Lord, hast done it" (Ps. XXXVIII, 10).

III. POINT.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

If we wish to derive from the afflictions of this life the fruit and the eternal recompense which is promised to them, let us suffer them, not only with courage and with submission to the orders of God, but also with humility. Every sin must be expiated by a penalty proportioned to its malice; and "if Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand" Thine anger (Ps. CXXIX, 3). I thought myself ill-treated, unhappy, I accused of injustice those who afflicted me; but since Thou hast opened mine eyes to know my own injustice, and all that I have done against Thee, what men do to me begins to appear a very little thing, or even to be nothing at all; for all that they make me endure is insufficient to expiate the least of my sins against Thee, O my God, who alone art worthy to be loved. Shall he, who has merited hell, by offending Thee, dare to complain of the passing miseries of this

life, and shall he not regard them as merciful chastisements, or rather as favors which Thy mercy provides for him, to enable him to avoid the severity of divine justice? May I then humble myself under Thy powerful hand! May I acknowledge Lord, that "it is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications," and that I may be justified (Ps. CXVIII, 71).

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

Lessons of the draught of fishes.

I. POINT.

"They left all, and followed Him."

(*Mat. IV, 20.*)

Jesus in all His actions had thoughts and designs worthy of Himself. By the miraculous draught of fishes He wished to draw the apostles to follow Him. He had called them and they had followed Him; but they had not given themselves entirely nor irrevocably to Him; for they had returned to their homes and to their ordinary occupations. Seeing this miracle, they were, on the contrary, seized with astonishment and awe. Jesus impressed them with His divinity, and persuaded them that He was the Messiah; so that, taking an efficacious resolution to attach themselves inseparably to Him, they left all, abandoned all, and followed Him to be always with Him, and never to leave Him. O Jesus, who hast wrought so many miracles in my favor, greater and more surprising than those which drew Thy faithful disciples to Thee; Thou, who upon our altars dost renew Thy wonders of grace, of mercy and love! grant that they may act efficaciously upon me, that they may touch and convert me, that they may tear me from all things and from myself, to give me to Thee, and unite me to Thy goodness forever.

II. POINT.

Another design of Jesus in this miracle was to teach the apostles the holiness and the dignity of their vocation, which called them to the conquest of the whole earth: the draught of fishes was its figure. "Fear not," said Jesus; "henceforth you shall be fishers of men" (Luke V, 10); you shall convert them, He, who "callesth those things that are not, as those that are" (Rom. IV, 17), and who is obeyed, draws the apostles from a place and state so abject, so contemptible, so far beneath their new situation, to call them, and to establish them in the apostolic dignity, that is, to confide to them the conversion of the whole world. The Son of man wished by this to teach us that He has no need of the power, the wisdom, and the greatness of the world to accomplish His designs; that all the glory is due to Him alone, and that if He sometimes makes use of us, we ought to regard ourselves as insignificant instruments which can do nothing except as He directs and guides them according to His pleasure. Let us then accustom ourselves to refer to Him all the honor of the good that we do; let us recognize the grace of the vocation which has drawn us from our miseries, from the filth of our sins, to bring us to Him, to "call us from darkness to His admirable light," to the perfection of His love (I Pet. II, 9).

III. POINT.

Finally, we see in this miracle the figure of the Church in its birth and progress. Jesus was teaching the people who were on the shore, and St. Peter's ship was coasting near the land. The command which Jesus gave him to advance in the middle of the water, represented that the gentiles, that the whole universe, by the preaching of the apostles, would receive the

word of God, that His kingdom and His knowledge would spread throughout the whole earth: so, in the first conversion of souls Jesus still teaches on the shore: He draws us a little away from the land, that is from sensible attachments, from dangerous thoughts and affections; but afterwards He calls us and leads us into the deep sea of evangelical perfection; He draws us by the odor of His perfumes (Cant. I, 3), detaches us from ourselves, makes us leave all, to unite us to Him, to abandon ourselves entirely to His providence and love, either to live in retirement or to labor for the salvation of souls. O Jesus, be the sovereign and only guide of my soul, let me no longer creep upon earth, but raise me even to Thyself; guide me, and make me walk faithfully in the way of Thy paths (Ps. CXIII, 35).

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

Success only through Christ.

I. POINT.

“We have labored all the night and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net.”
(Luke V, 5.)

The Old Law was the night; for the Sun of Justice had not yet risen: then men labored and took nothing. “The Law,” says St. Paul, “brought nothing to perfection” (Heb. VII, 19); it laid heavy burdens, and gave no aid; it commanded and did not give grace to accomplish; but the Son of God came Himself to be “our Lawgiver” (Is. XXXIII, 22), He who is the source of all merit and all good works: it is then Jesus, who commands and who gives grace to obey; it is He who obliges to labor, and who furnishes the strength; besides, formerly all was done through fear, and the Jews were regarded only as servants; but we are “called

to the adoption of the children of God'' (Rom. VIII, 23); therefore Jesus has given us a law which is all charity; He leads us by love, and our love for Him consists in keeping His commandments (I John IV, 16), the observance of which is very easy. O great advantage of the New Law! O how sweet is the yoke of Jesus, how light His burden (Mat. XI, 30), since He strengthens those who bear it.

II. POINT.

Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Of ourselves and by our own strength we can do nothing, we are incapable of any good; we are in darkness and in the night of sin, which adds to our impotence and our nothingness a new unworthiness before God; so that, without His mercy and grace, though we should labor till the day of judgment, we could not perform the least action worthy of Him and of an eternal reward. Without Him, we toil in the night and take nothing; we deceive ourselves, because we labor enveloped in the darkness of sin; because the good that we do is not referred to God by a pure intention; because we seek ourselves; and our own convenience, glory and interest are the end of our actions; O my God, how many, relying on the apparent holiness of their life and on their good works, will find themselves empty-handed at the hour of death, when the veil of self-love shall be removed. They will say, but too late: We have labored and suffered long, and we have taken nothing, amassed nothing, and merited nothing for heaven. O Jesus, may I now say: I have taken nothing, that I may not say it then: may I go forth from my darkness and from the unhappy night by which I am surrounded. May I at last see Thy light! may I groan over so many labors, so many

actions, so many sufferings which have been in vain for me, because I have not referred them to Thee, or because the state of sin in which I lived, made me love them.

III. POINT.

“They enclosed a great multitude of fishes” (Luke V, 6). At the word of Jesus they took more in one moment, than they had taken during the eve and the whole night. O word of Jesus, fruitful and efficacious, which drew the world from nothing, and which, in the order of grace, raises up from the hardest stones children unto Abraham! For it is He, who softens hardened and rebellious hearts, to render them docile and make them victims of His love; by His word He touches them, He changes them; and he who is pliant to His grace, who obeys Him, produces more fruit and amasses more treasures in a day, than the proud man, who labors more, but according to his caprice and passions, would do in an age. O my God, at Thy almighty word uncreated and incarnated for us, relying on Thy grace, we will again cast the net; acknowledging our weakness, we confess that without Thee we can do nothing; but we may also say with Thy apostle: “I can do all things in Him, who strengtheneth me” (Phil. IV, 13). I submit then to all Thy will, O Lord, I do not refuse to execute it in anything; give me the grace to do all that Thou shalt command, and command what Thou pleasest.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should expect the resurrection of the body.

I. POINT.

“We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God.” (Rom. VIII, 22.)

Why does St. Paul, after having so often told us that we are the children of God, speak of the matter as

a thing that we are still expecting? We in fact, possess this adoption; for St. John says: "Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (I John III, 1); it is then because the glory of this divine adoption will be full and complete only in heaven: there it is reserved in its fulness for those who have preserved the grace of their adoption, for those who have loved and imitated God as His dear children. We groan then, waiting for the perfection and assurance of this glory to which we can attain only by death. Till then our faith is always doubtful, for we may fall from the highest and holiest state: this should induce us to have constant recourse to God with humble confidence, that, leaving this world, we may enter into the full possession of that glory without fear of ever losing it.

II. POINT.

We await the deliverance and the resurrection of our bodies (Rom. VIII, 23). This expectation is only for the just and the children of God; it is only for those who hold their flesh captive under the law of grace, who immolate it, sacrifice it, and keep it submissive to the spirit, in a word, who no longer live according to the flesh. Does it not belong to the justice of the Supreme Remunerator, that the bodies that have been the companions of the labors, sufferings and humiliations of the saints, which have served as instruments in all their good works, should share the recompense with them; that he, who has hidden and humbled himself, should be glorified, and that he should "shine as a sun in the kingdom of the heavenly Father" (Mat. XIII, 43). That the body which has been penitent, afflicted, which has suffered in so many ways, should share in

the rest of the soul, which it has aided and served in the great work of salvation and sanctification; that this body, which has so often died by the mortification of Jesus Christ (II Cor. IV, 10), by which it has always been surrounded, should at last be delivered from "the hand of death" (Osee XIII, 14); that the body having been laid in the earth as a good seed, corruptible, material, deformed, weak and without splendor, should rise again clothed with power, "incorruptible, spiritual and glorious" (I Cor. XV, 53). Nothing could be more just.

III. POINT.

We await the deliverance and resurrection of our bodies. This expectation supposes a captivity; they then who follow the irregular desires of the flesh, and render the soul the slave and captive of their passions, instead of subjecting their bodies to the law of the spirit, have no reason to aspire to this blessed deliverance of the body. Yet all shall rise again; but, as St. Paul teaches, all will not be changed; for he says: I declare unto you that "flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God" (I Cor. XV, 50). Therefore, he so often repeats to us: Live not according to the flesh; for if you live according to its laws, if you follow its inclinations, "you shall die" (Rom. VIII, 13); and he refers to that last death which will have no resurrection. Jesus explains this mystery still more clearly: They, says He, who have done good, shall rise again unto life; and they who have done evil shall rise again to be condemned and punished (John V, 29). O Jesus, cut, smite, afflict my soul and my body in this life, provided Thou wilt pardon me in the other, that in my flesh and with my eyes I may see Thee eternally (Job XIX, 26), O God, my Saviour, and that my soul, united to Thee, may bless Thee throughout immortal ages.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.**Meaning of the draught of fishes.****I. POINT.**

"They took so great a multitude of fishes, that they filled another ship." (Luke, V, 7).

The prodigious quantity of fishes, which St. Peter took at the word of Jesus, represents the abundant draught which he was to make of men, by the conversion of all the various nations to the Church, figured by his bark. In former times God was known only in Judea, as David said (Ps. LXXV, 2); He was called only the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but after the coming of the Saviour the prediction of the prophet was fulfilled: I will give you all nations for your inheritance (Ps. II, 8). The Church, like a prolific vine, spreads its branches throughout the universe. The whole earth is filled with the majesty of the Lord (Ps. LXXI, 19); His dominion extends from sea to sea; all the kings of the earth adore Him, all nations are subject to Him; His name which was before the sun, is glorified by all the people. Finally, the Lord reigns and the whole earth is filled with God (Ps. XCVI, 1). We give Thee thanks, O my God! Extend Thy reign over us, may it be established in us, and whilst all things are subject to Thee, may we never rebel against Thy just empire; direct us, govern us; may all our hearts love Thee; may it be their delight to depend on Thee; may Thy will be the rule of ours, and may we accomplish it as perfectly as is done in heaven (Mat. VI, 10).

II. POINT.

They took so great a multitude of fishes that their net broke (Luke V, 6). This abundant draught of fishes, which breaks all the nets, represents, according

to St. Augustine, the peril to which the Church is exposed by the great number of cowardly Christians. They come in multitudes, says this Father, to oppress her, to break the net of her union, and by their life and corrupt manners, so different from those of the saints, to introduce relaxation in her discipline; for this relaxation serves as a pretext for the weak, to hasten to their destruction with more security. Excusing themselves by the examples of others, who have walked in the broad way of vanity and passion, they imagine they have a right to follow it also. But sin does not cease to be sin, because it is committed by a greater number. Woe to those who are surprised in this broad way! Let us then not choose it, though so attractive in appearance, for it leads to perdition. Nevertheless, says Jesus, many follow it: let us not imitate them; let us separate from the multitude, and listen to this warning: Fly to the mountain, lest you also be consumed (Gen. XIX, 7). Let us imitate the small number of the just and the predestined, who choose the narrow way, and let us strive to enter it; for "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mat. XX, 16).

III. POINT.

"Woe to him by whom scandal cometh" (Mat. XVIII, 7), says our Lord. Woe to those, who in destroying themselves, destroy others, who are to others a stumbling-block, and, by the pernicious example of their relaxed life, drag them along, and involve them in the same irregularities, and afterwards in the ruin of their souls! Would it not be better for such, according to the words of Jesus Christ, to be cast into the depths of the sea? What chastisements ought they not to expect from the inflexible justice which renders to every man according to his works? If he who aids in the

salvation of his brother, secures his own salvation, what must he dread, who disseminates worldly maxims either among the ordinary faithful or among souls consecrated to God, and more especially called to His service, and who thus becomes, not only during his life, but also after his death, the cause of ruin to so many souls? On the contrary, blessed are they, who by their holy life, are the good odor of Jesus Christ, who bear it everywhere, who instil His fear and love into all hearts.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to approach holy Communion.

I. POINT.

“Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.”
(*Luke V, 8.*)

God and the sinner cannot dwell together. The holiness of Jesus, the Man-God, cannot endure sin; there is nothing to which He is so opposed. God expels sin from the soul by His grace, or sin banishes God by its malice. Jesus destroys sin wherever He finds it, either by His mercy, pardoning it as a Saviour, or by His justice, punishing it as a judge. How can the sinner, who deserves to be exterminated from the earth, hurled into hell, and crushed by the power of God, venture to appear before the divine majesty! Ought he not to say, considering the greatness and infinite holiness of God and his own unworthiness: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord? Or rather, O my God, deign to be favorable to me (*Luke XVIII, 13*), efface my sin, and make me worthy to approach Thee.”

II. POINT.

We find in the humility of St. Peter the model of the sentiments with which we should be penetrated

when approaching holy Communion, for will not he, like the apostles, be filled with astonishment, who, with a lively faith, beholds the holiness of God, dwelling on our altars, of God, before whom even the angels are not without spot, before whom they are full of reverence and awe! The sacred text says, the apostles "were all astonished at the miracle which Jesus wrought" (Luke V, 9). He has accomplished miracles much more surprising and numerous in the Sacrament of the Altar, in ourselves and by our own hands: He bends down and contracts Himself, as formerly Elias did, to raise us to life, to proportion Himself to our weakness; "He bowed the heavens", says the prophet, "and came down" (Ps. XVII, 10). Here He does more; He, who is higher than the heavens, who made the heavens, lowers and abases Himself in this mystery. How profoundly should we humble ourselves, then, in the presence of the Man-God, who, for love of us, annihilates Himself in this manner. O Lord, contrasting my unworthiness with Thy adorable holiness, shall I not exclaim: Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a great sinner!

III. POINT.

If the greatness of God astonishes us, His love attracts us; if His holiness seems to cause Him to withdraw from us, His goodness, which pours itself upon us, brings Him near to us, and gives us confidence to go to Him: such are the sentiments which ought to be produced by the Blessed Eucharist, the mystery of charity, the Sacrament of peace and union which joins together the two extremes, the creature to the Creator, the heavenly with the earthly, the Holy of holies with the sinner, nothing to the infinite Being, who alone is called pre-eminently He who is, God with man. If the

sight of my misery and the dread of Thy greatness move me to say, Depart from me, O Lord, devotion, love, gratitude, the humble sentiment of my pressing need of Thee, will impel me to say: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Apoc. XXII, 20), "come, and make no delay" (Ps. XXXIX, 18). I am a sinner, it is true; but I cease to be so, as soon as I begin to love Thee. I am a sinner, but Thou art the salvation and the Saviour of sinners. I fall every day, it is true, and therefore I need every day a remedy so powerful. I am weak, therefore I must eat often, I must take the Bread which strengthens, that I may go to the mountain of God. Give me then, O Lord, this sacred Bread, which is Thyself. Lord, depart not from me, abandon me not: I will not flee before Thee as Adam did, recognizing his nakedness, because Thou hast power to cover mine; I will not flee, because I am overwhelmed under the weight of my faults: for that very reason I will approach Thee with humble confidence; Thou alone canst deliver me from my sins and make me just.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

We must seek what is heavenly and perfect.

I. POINT.

Jesus, "going into one of the ships, that was Simon's, desired him to draw back a little from the land."

(Luke V, 3.)

One of the first sentiments which Jesus inspires in hearts into which He enters, is contempt and disgust for the possessions of this world. He withdraws us from them gradually, to detach our affections entirely, that they may turn towards Him, and rise with a rapid flight to the highest heaven, the abode of His glory and majesty. Therefore St. Paul exhorts us so frequently

and in so many ways, to seek, to love and to enjoy the things of heaven; to have our conversation there, to lift our desires upward, and not allow our thoughts to creep upon earth (Col. III, 2); to become spiritual, to strip ourselves of the earthly and corrupt man, to conform ourselves to the new and heavenly man (Eph. IV, 24). "He that is of the earth, of the earth he is," says the precursor, "and of the earth he speaks" (John III, 31). We, then, who are born for heaven, must raise our hearts heavenward and seek the infinite goods prepared there for us, disdaining all earthly goods. Jesus Christ did not desire them for Himself, let us not wish for them, lest, attaching ourselves to them, we should perish with what is perishable, and, for a mere appearance, should lose the reality; lest we should abandon truth itself for vanity.

II. POINT.

"Launch out into the deep" (Luke V, 4). Jesus, as a skilful and charitable physician, who proportions food and remedies to the health of his patients, at first tolerates our little failings; and after having healed the wounds which sin had inflicted, and dispelled the darkness with which it had enveloped us, after having delivered us from the illusion of the senses, of self-love and the passions, purifies our hearts more and more; He elevates our affections, and calls us to Christian and evangelical perfection, a perfection which is for all ages and all conditions of life; for he deceives himself who thinks it is reserved for the ministers of the altar, or relegated to the cloister. The practice of the counsels, it is true, is not of obligation for all, but all are obliged to walk by the narrow way, to humble themselves, to conquer themselves, to do themselves violence, to do penance, in a word, to imitate Jesus Christ, the only

model of all the predestined, and to be "perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat. V, 48).

III. POINT.

Every Christian is so truly called to perfection and holiness, that when Jesus Christ gives the great precept, which comprises all, the sacred text specifies that He addressed Himself to all; and, moreover, His very words clearly show that every one is included. "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke IX, 23): this is the law from which no one is exempt. But are we obliged to follow Jesus Christ? Yes, for no one cometh to the Father, but by Him (John XIV, 6); He is the way, He is the door: whoever strays from it, cannot find life. In the primitive Church the name of Christian and that of saint were synonymous, and the latter is the one by which St. Paul was wont to address the faithful. Their lives and their morals were, in fact, all holy: they were humble, penitent, poor in spirit, obedient, patient in sufferings, given to all kinds of good works. The saints who have followed them, have done and practised all these things; otherwise they would not have been saints. Can we, then, reach heaven by a different way? The road that leads to it is singular, there is no other: we must be saints or devils, unhappy forever with the damned, or blessed with God and the saints for all eternity: there is no middle way. O my God, by Thy grace make me comprehend and practise this essential truth.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

We must constantly strive after perfection and heaven.

I POINT.

“We, who have the first fruits of the spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God.” (Rom. VIII, 23.)

In another epistle St. Paul adds, “I am not conscious to myself of anything, I am not thereby justified” (1 Cor. IV, 4). “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. IX, 27). The same apostle says finally: “I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. III, 14). If St. Paul, who had labored and suffered more than all the other apostles, who had been tried in so many ways, works out his salvation in fear and trembling, if he thinks that he has not attained perfection, shall we, who have scarcely taken the first step towards it, slumber in a rash security, as if we had nothing more to do, as if the inheritance of the crown of the children of God was due to our merits and already acquired? Let us learn from the saints, to humble ourselves, to labor even unto death, to acquire each day some new degree of virtue, to secure our vocation and adoption by good works (2 Pet. I, 10). Let us not pause in our course, for he who pauses, goes back. Let us run so well, that we shall win the prize (1 Cor. IX, 24); for only “he, that shall persevere to the end, shall be saved” (Mat. XXIV, 13).

II. POINT.

The life of the Christian should be a continual suffering. He should feel the weight of his chains, of the passions which rule over him, which disquiet him,

and of which he can never be entirely relieved; he should feel the weight of the law of sin, which holds him captive in spite of himself, and which made St. Paul say: "I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do" (Rom. VII, 15); and Job said: Why, O Lord, "hast Thou set me opposite to Thee, and I am become burdensome to myself?" (Job VII, 20). The Christian ought to sigh over the miseries of his exile, because he is banished and far from his country, compelled to live in the midst of his enemies, in a strange land,—in this corrupt world, where the laws of God are not known, where they are at least so little observed, where God is so much offended, so little loved, and where often, notwithstanding the light and the gift of faith which He has bestowed upon us, He receives from us a thousand outrages, because of our unworthy weakness. We estrange ourselves from Him by multiplied, countless sins. Who, then, will not groan, who will not sigh for his deliverance, who will not exclaim with David: "Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged"! (Ps. CXIX, 5). "I met with trouble and sorrow, and I called upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. CXIV, 4). "Bring my soul out of prison", O my God, "that I may praise Thy name; the just wait for me, until Thou reward me" (Ps. CXLI, 8).

III. POINT.

"We sigh for the accomplishment of the adoption of the children of God." The greatest saints are those who have felt most keenly the miseries of this exile. As they loved God alone and above all, they suffered inconceivably, seeing themselves so far from Him; nothing here below could satisfy them, because nothing shared their affections; nothing could fill their desires, because they desired only God; nothing could satisfy

them, because they wished for Him alone. God is the sovereign good of man; and the heart of man, created for the Lord, can find rest only in Him. Our heart may indeed be amused by creatures, but it cannot be filled with them, and still less fully satisfied. Let us, then, desire this singular good, this only true good, the possession of God. We must not desire evil things. says St. Augustine; we must desire good things but little and without attachment; but we must desire without measure the Good which cannot be measured, the immense, infinite, unchanging Good, which is God Himself. Let us rise with a rapid flight towards this object, the only one worthy of us: in this single pursuit of the supreme Good, in this faithful and constant attachment to the inexhaustible source of felicity, we shall enrich ourselves, lay up treasures of graces, of virtues and merits, and attain to the blessed accomplishment of the adoption of the children of God. O Lord, my God and my all! When will the happy moment come, when I shall seek Thee in this manner, and when all that is not Thyself, will appear to me insignificant and contemptible!

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

The New Law requires greater perfection from us.

I. POINT.

“Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. V, 20).

The New Law contains a state of perfection, elevated infinitely above the Old Law, and to this perfection all Christians are obliged to aspire. Moses is the Law-giver of the one; Jesus Christ our Lord, the source of all grace and all perfection, is the author of the other;

for "the law", says St. John, "was given by Moses, and grace by Jesus Christ" (John I, 17). Moses was the servant in the house of God, and Jesus is the Master; therefore He pronounces with authority, as if He said: Formerly, Moses spoke, he who was only a minister and servant, but I, who am your Lord and your God, I say unto you, that if your justice does not abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. O Jesus, whose almighty word formed the earth and the heavens, when Thou shalt enter into my soul by holy Communion, say to me, but with that efficacious word which always makes itself obeyed: "Be ye holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev. XIX, 2).

II. POINT.

It belongs to the children to imitate their father; a privilege not granted to the slaves of the house. The ancients were only servants, guided by severity and fear; and we are the children of the family of God: we have received the spirit of adoption, we are drawn by love, to imitate God our Father. St. Paul says to us: "Be ye followers of God as dear children" (Eph. V, 1); "be ye perfect", says our Lord, "as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat. V, 48). Who will not love such a Father? Who will not despise the vain promises and advantages of this world? Who will not trample under foot all its greatness, to preserve that of so high and sublime an adoption, to fill with dignity this divine character of children of God? O Jesus, lift up our hearts and our affections; imprint in our souls a holy ambition, an ardent zeal to aspire to perfection, to Christian holiness, and to labor efficaciously to acquire the same.

III. POINT.

“Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees”, that is, not only their vain traditions, but also the justice of all the Old Law, “you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus came to correct and perfect the law, He made us contract stricter obligations, by proposing to us evangelical perfection. This perfection, moreover, consists especially in a filial love, in the purest and most disinterested love, and this love makes it sublime and easy. The multitude of the ancient commandments is reduced to a single one, that of love, which includes them all. The Son of God calls the law of love pre-eminently His commandment, for He says: “A new commandment I give unto you; that you love one another, as I have loved you” (John XIII, 34): a commandment which is only a continuation, a fulfilment and an extension of the first: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Deut. VI, 5): a law of love, a commandment of charity, the principal and most excellent of all the precepts, because it is that of Jesus, and because it contains the germ of all the others, according to the words pronounced by His very lips, that this practice contains all the law and the prophets (Mat. XXII, 40). By the practice of this evangelical charity may we always and in all places make our justice exceed that of the scribes and pharisees.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

Qualities of Christian holiness.

I. POINT.

“Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. V, 20).

How important must that precept be, which Jesus Christ, Supreme Equity, proposes to us, and obliges us

to observe, under penalty of being banished forever from His kingdom. Let us examine what is the perfection, which He demands of us, and which must exceed that of the pharisees; for these doctors of the Law boasted of being models of justice and virtue. Perhaps they were so before men; but they were not so in the eyes of God, and for this reason Jesus reproaches them: you take care to appear just before men, but God knows your hearts (Luke XVI, 15). "Woe to you, pharisees, hypocrites! because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but within, you are full of rapine and uncleanness" (Mat. XXIII, 25). This was the first defect in their justice, for it was only exterior: our justice should be exterior and interior at the same time. Exterior justice should derive its force and origin from the depths of the heart; all our glory consists in the testimony of our own conscience, says St. Paul (1 Cor. IV, 4). "All the glory of the king's daughter is from within", says the royal prophet (Ps. XLIV, 14); for God sounds and penetrates the inmost recesses of the heart; there He sees us, and it is He, and not the world, who judges and rewards us.

II. POINT.

"Thou blind pharisee", said Jesus, "first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean" likewise (Mat. XXIII, 26). It is, then, the heart which must first be reformed, that afterwards the actions, which proceed from it as from a pure source, may be pure and holy, not only in the eyes of men, but much more in the eyes of God. We ought to do good with the single intention of pleasing Him; we ought to act in an edifying manner, without thinking whether we shall be approved or blamed by men, since it is God, and not they, whom we are to

serve and please; and if the service which we render to Him, if our fidelity to Him draws upon us their censure, we should rejoice according to the words of Jesus: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, untruly for My sake" (Mat. V, 11), then rejoice and be filled with delight, for a great reward is laid up for you in heaven. Blessed injury, exclaimed St. Paulinus, happy destiny, to displease the world and suffer its contempt for the love of Jesus Christ.

III. POINT.

If we wish our justice to be truly Christian and above that of the pharisees, according to the commandment of Jesus, it must also be uniform, it must be sustained in prosperity as in adversity, before all, and with all, towards God and towards men. It must observe the commandments without exception; for as he who errs in a single point of the faith, is wanting in all, so he cannot be considered faithful who despises or violates a single article of the law. Jesus reproached the Jews for this also: "You pay tithes", you discharge some points of the law, and you "have left the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy. These things you ought to have done, and not leave those undone" (Mat. XXIII, 23). "He, that feareth God, neglecteth nothing" (Eccles. VII, 19); he does not rely on his good works, but he constantly repeats to himself the words of Jesus: "These things you ought to have done, and not leave those undone." "Jesus Christ", says St. Paul, "yesterday and to-day, and the same forever" (Heb. XIII, 8); He must, then, every day be served and obeyed: He made the chief commandments and the less important as well; therefore they must be equally accomplished.

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.**Avoid evil and do good.****I. POINT.**

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. III, 10).

Scripture is full of the punishments prepared for sinners, and the rewards destined for the just. We must not deceive ourselves: the happy days, the divine life of which the prince of the apostles here speaks, after the holy king David, are only for the just; sinners, they who do evil, whose hearts are full of iniquity and malice, have no claim to them. Withdraw, then, from evil, “fly from sin as from the face of a serpent” (Eccli. XXI, 2); tremble even at the appearance of sin; for “he that loveth danger” and exposes himself to it, “shall perish in it” (Eccli. III, 27). It is a salutary sacrifice to refrain from all iniquity and to keep the commandments. O Lord, said David, I consider from the early morning, that “Thou art not a God that willest iniquity” (Ps. V, 5); nothing defiled can enter into Thy holy city (Apoc. XXI, 27). Therefore I will observe my ways, my steps, my words and my whole conduct, that I may not offend Thee (Ps. CXVIII, 15).

II. POINT.

To fly from evil is only a part of justice, therefore St. Peter, after David, adds that we must do good (1 Pet. III, 11, and Ps. XXXIII, 15). It is not enough to avoid sin, we must also practise virtue; it is not enough not to take or envy the possessions of others, we must also share ours with them; it is not sufficient not to hate our neighbor, not to do him evil, we must love him, oblige him and serve him; we must obey, not only the law which forbids, but also that which ordains;

chastisement is not only for the unfaithful and wasteful servant, but also for the slothful and idle servant. We must act according to God, and endeavor to please Him, by doing all kinds of good works. "Lord", asks David, "who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit nor hath done evil to his neighbor" (Ps. XIV, 1, 2); he, whose hands are not only pure, but full of good works; he, who not only has kept his talent, but who has made it profitable to acquire many others. This should be to many Christians a cause of trembling!

III. POINT.

"Let them seek after peace and pursue it" (1 Pet. III, 11). Jesus, in Holy Scripture, is called the God of peace, the "Prince of peace" (Is. IX, 6); He loves peaceful souls; in them He establishes His abode, and works the greatest wonders of His grace and love. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mat. V, 9). It is not, then, enough to love peace and to seek it, we must use all our care to find it, to procure it for others, and to pursue it, even though it should fly from us, that is, when obstacles, almost invincible, present themselves. After the example of David, we should be peaceful even with those who hate peace (Ps. CXIX, 7). There are two kinds of peace: the one is acquired by meekness, patience, and the bearing with the defects of our neighbor, so earnestly recommended by St. Paul; the other peace is the recompense and the consequence of the former, that peace which the same apostle places among the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and which he so often invokes upon the faithful: "May the peace of our Lord keep your hearts and your minds", may this peace,

which surpasses all understanding, be always with you (Phil. IV, 7). A peace which Jesus Christ has acquired for us by His labors; a peace which tranquillizes our passions and subdues them to the spirit, which enables us to suffer with joy; which, amid accidents and agitations, enables us to rest in God, and then nothing on earth can distract and turn us aside from His love. O precious peace, mayst thou always reign in my heart for the glory of God and for my eternal salvation!

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christian, religious and sacerdotal perfection.

I. POINT.

“Unless your justice abound more than that of the pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
(Mat. V, 20.)

As the New Law surpasses the Old, so the religious state is raised in perfection above the secular state, and the ecclesiastical Order in holiness and dignity is above all the states in the Church: consequently, as Christians are called to a higher virtue than the Jews, by the mere profession of the Evangelical Law, so persons consecrated to God by Holy Orders, or by the vows of Religion, have a stricter engagement and a more special obligation to observe the counsels and the perfection of the Gospel, than the ordinary faithful. How important is it then for both, for each one, according to his state, to be persuaded and convinced of the necessity of laboring for his own sanctification, to recognize the end and eminence of his vocation, in order to esteem it and correspond to it by his works!

II. POINT.

The sacerdotal state demands especially great perfection and eminent holiness. A priest is a priest not

only for himself, but to pour forth holiness, as from a living spring, upon all the different states. There are many differences between the religious and the sacerdotal state. Religion furnishes excellent and continual means to acquire perfection; but the sacerdotal state bears in itself, and demands in the subjects who are clothed with it, a virtue and a perfection already acquired. What sublime perfection, what superabundant justice is required in those who are to communicate it to others, who are to instruct them and serve for their models and examples, who are to make themselves respected, still more by their holiness, than by the eminence of their dignity, which, however, must always be honored in their person! But what a misfortune if the sun is changed into darkness; if they who are to serve as guides are blind; if they who ought to be the masters of virtue, are unworthy even to be disciples; if the public fountains are without water, and if the life of the individual is opposed and contrary to the holiness of his state!

III. POINT.

The threat of the Son of God astonishes us and surprises us: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." That is said to all and to each one, according to the different states and various conditions. Jesus Christ does not say: You shall not be great saints, you shall not be counted among the seraphim, you shall not occupy the first places in My kingdom, but you shall never enter there, you shall be excluded forever. How much, then, may we fear that Christians, if they are not just, and more just than the Jews, and that religious, if they are not perfect and holy, will be banished from the kingdom of heaven! How much

more may we fear for priests and superiors, who in losing themselves, cause others to be lost by their bad example, involving them in their own ruin. Such priests, such superiors are condemned, not only for their own sins, but also for the sins of others. O terrible threat! "You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What is this kingdom worth, and what is its price? If it should be lost, how irreparable the loss!

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

The law of Christ.

I. POINT.

"But I say unto you" (Mat. V, 22).

The character and perfections of Him who speaks and commands, should make a great impression on our minds, for it is Jesus Christ Himself. His holiness should cause us to esteem Him, His goodness should cause us to love Him, His truth should make us believe Him, His power should subdue us, and His authority obliges us to obey Him. He, who now makes His voice heard, is Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, the God of glory, infinite Goodness, the First Truth, the Sovereign of our hearts and souls, for He redeemed them with His precious Blood. His authority is supreme; He is our God and our Lord by the rights of creation and redemption; it is He Himself that speaks to us and pronounces these words: "But I say unto you." With what attention should we listen to Him, with what respect should we receive His commandments, and, above all, with what fidelity and love should we execute them! He has the words of eternal life (John VI, 69), and he "who shall keep them, shall not taste death forever" (John VIII, 52).

II. POINT.

To whom does Jesus address these words: "I say unto you"? What are our relations to Him, and what is our dependence on Him? We are His creatures, His servants, His disciples; we are so also by grace and by the title of our redemption. We are His sheep, He is our Shepherd; we are His subjects, He is our King; we are His children, our souls are His spouses, He is our Father and our Spouse; we are His living temples (1 Cor. III, 16), He is our God; we are the objects of His love, the sanctuaries of His spirit, and the sepulchres of His glorious body in holy Communion; in it He is our life, our treasure, and our spiritual food. What, then, shall we do, O Jesus, to correspond to all these claims which Thou hast on us, to all the duties imposed upon us by Thy infinite goodness towards us! With what submission, what vigilance, what promptness, should we hasten to execute Thy orders, Thy will. Ought not His holy will to be the living rule and the continual occupation of our life! What homage, what respect, what gratitude, what love, ought we not to offer Him at every moment!

III. POINT.

As Jesus is holiness, justice and perfection itself, His laws are most just, His commandments most perfect, and His will is most holy. The Old Law seemed to forbid only the exterior act of sin. Jesus extends the restriction to our interior; for it is our heart and our affections that He desires: "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. XXIII, 26). It was not lawful to kill, now it is not lawful to be angry; formerly, a man was forbidden to do wrong to his brother, now he is not even permitted to wish him evil in his heart; he was ordered to love his neighbor, his friends, Jesus obliges

us to love even "our enemies and to do them good" (Mat. V, 44). Finally, the Old Law contained "the letter which killeth", Jesus adds to it "the spirit which giveth life" (2 Cor. III, 6), and with this new perfection, He renders His yoke sweeter and His burden lighter; because this perfection is love, and love knows neither labor nor pain. O Jesus, make us worthy to receive the unction of Thy grace and Thy spirit, that spirit which makes us "love Thy law and run in the way of Thy commandments" (Ps. CXVIII, 32).

Friday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

God's ways toward the just and toward sinners.

I. POINT.

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers."

(1 Pet. III, 12, and Ps. XXXIII, 16.)

God beholds the just with a look of love and protection, with benevolence; He has a paternal and special care of them; He foresees the dangers which threaten them, that He may turn them aside; He is with them in tribulation to console them (Ps. XC, 15), He is with them in sickness to relieve them (Ps. XL, 4). If they fall sometimes, the hand with which He sustains them, prevents the fall from being fatal. He shelters them under the shadow of His wings (Ps. LX, 5), He hides them in the secret of His tabernacle, to defend them from the darts of evil tongues; He sustains and strengthens them in persecution; finally, He grants their desires and listens to their prayers; "blessed, then, is he that feareth the Lord" (Ps. CXI, 1), and desires only to keep His commandments, for "the Lord will do the will of them that fear Him" (Ps. CXLIV, 19); He will hearken to them. Lord, "Thou hast pre-

vented" the just man "with the benedictions of Thy sweetness" (Ps. XX, 4); Thou hast given him the desires of his heart, and granted his petitions. How profitable it is to be just before Thee!

II. POINT.

The anger of the Lord is inflamed against sinners (1 Pet. III, 12). His eyes are upon them as well as upon the just; but it is to efface their memory from the earth, to "blot them out from the book of the living" (Ps. LXVIII, 29), that they may not be written with the just. I have said to the wicked: No longer continue your injustice, do not rise up insolently against heaven, for no assistance can come to you from elsewhere, it is God, who will judge you (Ps. LXXIV, 8). "The Lord keepeth all who love Him, but He will destroy all the wicked" (Ps. CXLIV, 20). Of what use will be their opulence, their greatness, their power, if the Lord is against them? For this they will reproach themselves eternally in the midst of their torments: For, what profit have we from the pride and the pomp of our riches? (Wis. V, 8). We have wearied ourselves in vain in the way of iniquity; "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul" (Mark VIII, 36), for all sinners who have flourished in the world will be punished forever. All those who stray from Thee, shall perish; Thou hast resolved to destroy all who separate from Thee: withdraw me, then, from the way of iniquity (Ps. LXXII, 27).

III. POINT.

"Who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good" (1 Pet. III, 13), says St. Peter. Who will accuse the elect of God, and if He is for us, who will be against us? (Rom. VIII, 31). "All things work together unto

good to them who love Him" (Rom. VIII, 28), even the injuries which they suffer from the wicked; therefore, says our Lord, "fear not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear Him, that can destroy both body and soul into hell" (Mat. X, 28). This is what the apostles teach us after Him; be not terrified by the threats of men; for if you suffer for justice, blessed are you. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him" (James I, 12). You rejoice when your goods are taken from you, knowing that you have more excellent treasures which will never perish. All things serve for the advantage of the saints, and often turn to the condemnation of sinners; therefore lose not your confidence, for the reward will be very great; patience is necessary for you, that, after having accomplished the will of God, you may receive the praise due to the faithful servant (Heb. X, 36). May these considerations urge us, O my God, to serve Thee faithfully!

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

Anger.

I. POINT.

"You know that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment." (Mat. V, 21.)

It should suffice to cure us of anger, and to excite us to repress its motions, to hear this condemnation from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. This great precept which He gives to all: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Mat. VII, 12), should

be our rule in this matter; for no one thinks it right that others should be irritated against him. He should put himself in the place of his brother; besides, St. James says: "The wrath of man worketh not the justice of God" (James I, 20); but as Jesus forbids even the first motions of anger, we should search for them in their source, in order to root them out; and then we shall see that this passion is so much the more dangerous, as it is properly the daughter of pride, the greatest of all the vices; it arises, in fact, when we think that we do not receive what is due to us, when our desires are opposed, when our lights are not followed, or when little esteem, or even contempt is shown to us: is it not this that moves and provokes us to anger every day? The means, then, to avoid pride is to cut off the root, and to ground ourselves in humility: this virtue, filling us with a contempt of ourselves, will enable us to bear with meekness and patience whatever others do or say that is disagreeable to us. Be humble, and you will be gentle. Jesus does not separate these two virtues, for He orders us especially to learn them from Him: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. XI, 29).

II. POINT.

"Whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Mat. V, 22). From the interior feeling of anger, which is not stifled in its source, arise insults, ill-treatment, injuries (Mat. XV, 19), as Jesus says elsewhere; for as the heart is the seat of life (Prov. IV, 23), so it is also the seat of death, and because "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mat. XII, 34), when it is full of gall and anger, it pours itself forth in stinging and offensive words: a sin for which Jesus condemns to eternal fire.

Therefore, render not evil for evil, nor injury for injury; do not defend yourself, says St. Paul; "bless them that persecute you, and curse them not" (Rom. XII, 14); bless them, because you are called to receive a blessing (1 Pet. III, 9). "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Rom. XII, 21), that you may not be deprived of that inheritance of benediction which is promised to you, and that you may one day hear from the just Judge these consoling words: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom which is prepared for you from the beginning of the world" (Mat. XXV, 34).

III. POINT.

"If, offering thy gift before the altar, thou dost remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, go, first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come to offer thy gift" (Mat. V, 24). By these words Jesus teaches us that we cannot please Him so long as we are angry with our brother; He wishes us to interrupt even our sacrifice and to leave Him, in order to be reconciled with our brother; otherwise our sacrifice is unworthy of Him, and He cannot look on it favorably. If, then, we have offended our neighbor, if he has just cause of complaint against us, for thus St. Augustine explains it, let us go, ask his pardon, and conciliate him by marks of true charity. According to the opinion of the same saint, this ought not always to be observed literally; for the distance of the offended person, or the circumstances of time and place, sometimes render it impossible, or make it a subject of scandal. We should then be satisfied with the sincere preparation of the heart, and the efficacious resolution to make satisfaction without delay. If the offence is mutual, be not afraid to take the first step; for we must not only wish peace,

but seek it (1 Pet. III, 11), and, as St. Paul says, endeavor to have it with all men (Rom. XII, 18).

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Our Saviour's compassion.

I. POINT.

"I have compassion on the multitude" (Mark VIII, 2).

Only Jesus can express Himself thus; for to Him alone it belongs to show mercy. Mercy has two parts, the feeling of the miseries of others, and the power to relieve them. God has the power; but, being impassible, He has not this compassion, which is a species of suffering. Man has the feeling; but he lacks the power. God, in becoming man, "clothed Himself with the bowels of mercy, with which He hath visited us" (Luke I, 78); He brought the power and dignity to merit and make satisfaction, and received weakness and compassion, in order to suffer: therefore in Him alone these two qualities are found admirably united. Lord, speak these words over me: I have pity on this soul, and immediately she will be healed; she will be sustained, nourished and sanctified; she will be freed from the bondage of sin, and filled with all true goods, coming from Thee as from their natural and always fruitful source.

II. POINT.

"They have been with Me three days", without leaving Me; for three days they have waited for Me (Mark VIII, 2). The whole world, from the time of creation, was expecting Jesus; three days had already passed, counting each law as a day; the law of nature, from Adam to Abraham; the law of the circumcision, from Abraham to Moses, who received the law written by the hand of God, and this third law, which lasted

till the coming of Jesus. What were the longings, the sighs and the ardent desires of all the ancient just for Jesus, called the "Expectation of nations" and the "Desire of the eternal hills" (Gen. XLIX, 10 and 26). O my soul, expect Jesus, because He will come and will not delay; expect Him with faith, expect Him with hope, go to meet Him with love, desire Him; for he, who expects and seeks Him, will not be abandoned nor disappointed in his expectation (Ps. IX, 11). "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God" (Ps. XLI, 1). "When shall I come and appear before Thy face?"

III. POINT.

"They have nothing to eat; if I shall send them away fasting, they will faint in the way" (Mark VIII, 3). The ancient figures and ceremonies served indeed to sustain the hope of all who lived before the coming of the Saviour, but not to nourish them: it was only an apparent nourishment, only "the shadow of things to come" (Col. II, 17), as St. Paul expresses it. But Jesus has given us the true bread and solid food by instituting the sacraments which sanctify souls; above all the sacrament, which is called holy by pre-eminence, because it contains the Holy of holies. All the delights of earth cannot sustain us, and without the grace and love of Jesus we shall perish in the way of this life. O heavenly and divine nourishment, which Jesus gives us at the altar, and which is no other than Himself! O Jesus, give us a spiritual hunger and thirst for Thee, who art the fountain of life and the bread of angels and saints in heaven and on earth, that by Thee and in Thee we may be supported in the miseries of our exile, and attain to Thee in heaven.

Monday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Baptism.

I. POINT.

“All we who are baptized in Jesus, are baptized into His death.”
(Rom. VI, 3.)

The institution of the sacraments is an inestimable blessing which Jesus Christ has conferred upon His Church, especially baptism, the most necessary for salvation, the door and the entrance to all the other sacraments: therein the body is washed, that the soul may be purified from the guilt and penalty due to sin. This benefit is so much greater, as it is given with what is most common in nature, *i. e.*, water; and, finally, the grace which it contains is bestowed upon us so gratuitously, that not only we cannot merit it, but it even anticipates and provides for the time in which we cannot co-operate with it; therefore it is merited for us by Jesus and given in His name. O ineffable goodness of God, who prevents us with the benedictions of His sweetness and grace, a grace which He grants us through pure liberality. But what did it not cost Him, in whose name and by whose virtue we receive it? This is a motive for our eternal gratitude.

II. POINT.

Baptism imprints in our souls the ineffaceable character of a perpetual engagement to the Most Blessed Trinity and our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we make a solemn and express profession to serve; in it we receive the mark and character of the children of God; we enter into His family; we become, at the same time, the servants of His house, His children and His heirs; in it “we receive the spirit of adoption” (Rom. VIII, 15), which makes us fear and love God as our Father.

O God, I am Thy servant: this is a title in which I glory; I am Thy servant and the son of Thy servant, the Church; make me worthy to serve Thee, to employ myself, to consume myself entirely for the interests of Thy glory, that, after having obeyed and served Thee faithfully here below, I may merit to share the inheritance of Thy children forever in heaven.

III. POINT.

We are baptized into His death, and buried with Him by baptism (Rom. VI, 4). St. Paul speaks thus to make us understand that baptism not only derives all its power and grace from the death of Jesus, but imprints in us the image of His death itself, of His burial and resurrection. This resemblance makes us contract the obligation to die for Him, to the old man, to the world, and to ourselves, to be hidden or buried with Him by humility, by separation from the vain-glory and all the pride of the world; that, being dead to sin and rendered conformable to Jesus Christ in His sufferings, in His abasements and death, we may rise with Him to lead a new life. O good Jesus, grant us the favor to die to all, that we may live henceforth for Thee alone, who didst die for us. This death is infinitely salutary, since it is to procure for us the ineffable advantage of rising one day to glory.

Tuesday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for confidence in our Lord.

I. POINT.

“I have compassion on the multitude” (Mark VIII, 2).

The words of Jesus were efficacious; His miracles were powerful, His actions full of divine charms; His grace and His love captivated the hearts and minds of men. They exclaimed: “Never did man speak like

this man" (John VII, 46); who can work such miracles, if not God (John IX, 33), if he is not animated with His spirit. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John VI, 69). To-day a multitude of four thousand persons, attracted by the sweetness of His words, leave their homes and follow Him, without provision, into the fields and desert. O Jesus, why dost Thou not draw my soul to Thee by the charms of Thy grace? Why dost Thou not attach it to Thee by the bonds of Thy love, that, forgetting all perishable things, I may follow Thee and attach myself to Thee alone.

II. POINT.

"I have compassion on the multitude." The providence of God always rests on His goodness; for God does nothing outside of Himself except through mercy, being under no obligation to do so: He regards Himself, and not us, when He does us good, because of ourselves we are objects worthy only of His contempt and severity, rather than of His favors. He is simply moved by His clemency and mercy, when He provides for our needs, compassionates our miseries, and relieves us; therefore, wishing to feed this great multitude in a miraculous manner, He looks upon them, and moved by compassion, He says: "I have compassion on the multitude." O Jesus, whose look is a source of graces and benefits, look upon us and have compassion on us (Ps. XXIV, 16). Look upon us and fill our hearts with Thy holy love.

III. POINT.

If the providence of Jesus wins our admiration to-day, it should also be the motive of our confidence. We ought to imitate the confidence of these people, and the fervent zeal which urged them to follow Jesus and

abandon themselves to Him without reserve. See what Jesus does in their favor; He never abandons those who trust in Him! "I have lifted my soul to Thee, O my God." I will not blush, because I have put my confidence in Thee. My enemies will not mock me, because "all they that hope in Thee, shall not be confounded" (Ps. XXIV, 2). Let us have confidence in the goodness of Jesus, let us rest in His paternal arms; He knows our needs, He can and will assist us, as far as is expedient for His glory and our salvation. He, who is with Thee, O Lord, and who abandons himself to Thy guidance, has nothing to fear; no evil can overtake him, without turning to his greater advantage. "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing" (Ps. XXII, 1).

Wednesday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

We ought to be dead and buried with Christ.

I. POINT.

"All we, who have been baptized in Christ Jesus, have been baptized in His death."

(Rom. VI, 3.)

The first obligation of the Christian is to die with Jesus Christ; he ought to consider himself on earth as a dead man, who has no share in all that is passing, and who is equally indifferent and insensible to its goods and miseries: he contracted this obligation in baptism. This happy insensibility is a great perfection; there are few that possess it, and have been truly detached from all that is not God: yet it is essential to Christianity, since it is the first engagement into which we enter by baptism; they who do not feel it, should at least aspire to it sincerely, notwithstanding the corruption and injustice of the world, which loves and

seeks only what ought to be hated, which treats Christians as bereft of sense, when they despise the vain pleasures which the world worships. O Jesus, may I say truly with Thy apostle: "I die daily" (1 Cor. XV, 31), "that I may live to God; I am nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ" (Gal. II, 19).

II. POINT.

"We have been buried with Jesus Christ by baptism, as having part in His death" (Rom. VI, 4). It is not enough for a Christian to be dead with Jesus, if he is not buried with Him in the sepulchre. The difference between a dead person and one who is in the tomb, is that the former is still present to the eyes of men, and occupies the care and attention of the living; whilst the latter, on the contrary, is absolutely separated from them, and there is no longer any remembrance of him on earth. If the former has now no part with the world, the world has still to do with him; it is busied about him, at least to render him the last duties; whereas the latter is so entirely cut off from the living, that nothing can be done for him, and he is henceforth only an object of horror, to be forgotten. O Jesus, may I retire into the solitude of Thy tomb, may I already be numbered with those who are hidden under the sod, who sleep in the sepulchres and are no longer remembered. Yet I will proclaim Thy mercies; and Thy wonders shall be known in the darkness, and Thy justice in the land of oblivion.

III. POINT.

In these two dispositions we shall find the fulfilment of our desires. We ought not only to be dead to the world, without regard to prosperity or adversity, but we should be satisfied to be treated as persons dead and buried, rejected forever, and forgotten as some-

thing as unendurable as a corpse. This was the condition of St. Paul, when he said that the world was crucified to him, and that he was crucified to the world (Gal. VI, 14). It is pride rather than virtue, to despise the world without wishing to be despised by it. With St. Paul let us rejoice to be unknown, forgotten, ignored, ill-treated, trampled under foot, as being crucified or laid in the tomb, because if "our life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God, when this same Jesus who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in His glory" (Col. III, 4).

Thursday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Lessons of the multiplication of the loaves.

I. POINT.

*Jesus took the seven loaves, and having given thanks,
He blessed them. (Mark VIII, 6.)*

The blessing of Jesus is efficacious as well as His word: "He spoke, and all things were made" (Ps. CXLVIII, 5). He blessed seven loaves, and these loaves, miraculously multiplied by His blessing, satisfied four thousand men, without counting the women and children. In this wonderful multiplication of the loaves He lifts us up, and prepares us for the knowledge of a more excellent miracle, which is the change, by virtue of the sacramental words, of the bread and wine into His Body and Blood: what nature formed, is no longer found; but only what the blessing, stronger than nature, has consecrated (St. Ambrose). The bread having become heavenly and divine, even God Himself is multiplied, not only in favor of some thousands of men, but of all the men who have lived since the institution of this mystery, and who will live until the end of ages. O Jesus, may Thy blessing which produces such mar-

vellous changes, change me and identify me with Thee by love! May it render me worthy of the Sacrament of Thy Body and prepare me to receive it.

II. POINT.

We see traced in the Gospel what we should do, and what Jesus demands of us, that we may merit to be nourished with the living Bread at the altar. He made the people sit down on the ground; they ate, and they were satisfied (Mark VIII, 8). In fact, what is it to sit on the ground, but to trample under foot all earthly things, to rise above earthly affections, to live no longer according to the old man, but according to the new. We find an example of this in the great multitude who followed Jesus Christ into the desert, and who, attaching themselves to Him, abandoned homes, friends, business, enjoyments, amusements, in a word, all things. Let us not blush to imitate this faithful company, let us practise, at least spiritually and in our hearts, what they do to-day; let us separate from the world, and firmly resolve to give up henceforward its vanities and allurements, to embrace the truth, to unite ourselves with Jesus in holy Communion, by living according to His laws and holy maxims.

III. POINT.

“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have already been with Me three days, and they have nothing to eat” (Mark VIII, 2). Souls that renounce the pleasures of the world to follow Jesus, have no longer anything on earth, because all that it contains cannot satisfy them. Shall they therefore want for food, support and consolation? Is it only the body that has its pleasures? Has not the soul, which is infinitely more noble, its enjoyments also? See what happens to this multitude: they find abundance in the desert;

men do not nourish them, but God Himself. When we renounce earthly satisfactions, we do not lose our pleasures, we only change them: we choose those of heaven instead of those of earth; we despise temporal pleasures, to acquire the joys of eternity, which will never pass away; and God, who is rich in mercy, rewards abundantly and a hundred-fold the little that we have left, or have done for Him. Let us exclaim with David: "One day in Thy courts, O Lord, is better than thousands in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. LXXXIII, 11).

Friday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ's three-fold compassion.

I. POINT.

"I have compassion on the multitude" (Mark VIII, 2).

Jesus said these words when He was on the mountain. There are three mysteries, which are like three lofty mountains, upon which He has established the throne of His mercy. The first is that of His Incarnation; for, from the first moment, He cast a favorable glance upon all men who then existed, who had existed, and who were yet to be. The prophet says: "He hath looked upon all who dwell on the earth" (Ps. XXXII, 14). He looked upon them from the virginal womb of Mary, prepared by the Holy Ghost; and then He said: "I have compassion". He took compassion on our miseries and resolved to deliver us, and to pour His graces upon us. All those which He had given to men, and which He still gives, come from this first motion of His soul, and from this first compassion of His heart. O Jesus, I adore Thy first look fixed on my sinful soul, as the source of all Thy favors; I desire to correspond to all Thy designs and to all Thy divine will in my regard.

II. POINT.

Calvary was another mountain, and the Cross another throne of the mercy of Jesus; for, being raised upon it, He regarded the souls of all the men who had existed since the creation of the world and who would exist to the end, for all of whom individually He shed His precious Blood; He was moved with compassion for them, and said: "I have compassion on the multitude." His mercy extended to heaven and to earth, to angels and men, to all ages past, present and to come; to time and eternity; in the order of grace and in that of glory. "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord" (Ps. CXVIII, 64), of the Lord Jesus crucified. O precious oil, which flows from the olive tree of the Cross! O Source of life, of grace and glory! Blessed be Thou, O Jesus, King of mercy; reign on the throne of Thy Cross, according to the prediction of Thy prophets.

III. POINT.

The third mountain is the Church; the third seat or tribunal of the mercy of Jesus is the sacred altar, for Jesus dwells there with us, to pour His graces upon us. There He communicates to us the merit of His sufferings and the fruit of His labors, of His life and His death, to sanctify us, to honor us with His presence, to vivify us with His love, and animate us with His spirit. Jesus sees all men, and especially those who are present there before Him. He penetrates their interior, He cries out powerfully, but with a voice which is heard only by pure and devoted hearts: I have compassion on these souls; and if any one thirst, let him come to Me and drink (John VII, 37). All you, who hunger and thirst after justice, come to Me, and you shall be satisfied. What cannot Jesus, present in this Sacrament, do in favor of well disposed souls? "Show us

Thy mercy, O Lord" (Ps. LXXXIV, 8); show us Thy face, and we shall be saved. It is especially at the altar, that Thou dost produce these effects. May I experience them for my own good, and for the glory of Thy holy Name.

Saturday after the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

Conditions of rising with Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

*"If we have been planted together in the likeness of
His death, we shall be also in the likeness of
His resurrection."* (Rom. VI, 5.)

St. Paul says elsewhere, that, if Jesus Christ did not rise, our faith and our hope are vain: in like manner, we may say, in vain baptism would give us a share in the death and burial of Jesus Christ, if it did not render us participators in His resurrection and in His new life; for, if we ought to die to the world, it is that we may live only to God; if we ought to be insensible to temporal things, it is that we may be so much the more moved with love for that which is eternal; if we ought to bury ourselves, in order to be hidden from the eyes and the conversations of worldly men, it is that we may dwell and converse in heaven, directing to it all our hopes, and all our love. Let us regard ourselves as dead to sin, as powerless to commit sin, but strong and courageous to live for God; let Him be equally the beginning and the end of all our actions, the only object of our desires and our love.

II. POINT.

"If we be dead with Christ" it is a certain truth, "that we shall also live together with Christ" (Rom. VI, 8). If we are dead to sin; if, as St. Paul says, the old man in us has been crucified with Jesus Christ, we

shall rise with Him to a life of grace, of love and of holiness here below on earth, until it is consummated and perfected in heaven by a life immortal and blessed. If we suffer with Him, we shall rise with Him; if we have been conformed to Him in His combats and victories, in His labors and patience, in His sorrow and ignominy, in His humiliations and opprobrium, we shall enter into the enjoyment of His rest, of His joy, of His felicity and His glory, we shall share His kingdom and His crown. Therefore, let us go, let us suffer and die with Him (John XI, 16). "God is faithful" (Deut. XXXII, 4) in His promises, for know "that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded" (Eccli. II, 11).

III. POINT.

Jesus "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him" (Rom. VI, 9). As Jesus in His resurrection took a new life, which He will never more lay down, so, if after having died to sin, we have participated in this new life, and have begun to live only for God, let us remain firm and steadfast in this blessed state, and let death have no more dominion over us. Let us lead a life conformed to the new man with whom we have been clothed, a life that will not be followed nor interrupted by the death of sin. Let us not fall back under the tyranny of this cruel monster, after having been freed from his bondage; and, having labored efficaciously to exterminate him, let us constantly mortify our evil inclinations, as St. Paul says: "They that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. V, 24). Let us not permit them to revive, let us never return to what we have rejected; let us not recall what we have abandoned, lest the end

should be worse than the beginning; for after grace has put sin to death, are we not ungrateful to grace, if we allow sin to revive, and do we not expose ourselves to be deprived of heaven eternally?

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Vocation and its obligations.

I. POINT.

“Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; every evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.”

(Mat. VII, 17.)

The tree should, first, be a good tree; but the tree cannot be good, if it is not planted by the hand of God. Secondly, it should be planted in a suitable place, for “they that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God” (Ps. XCI, 14). Therefore, let every one examine carefully, whether he is in the state in which God has placed him. No one should enter into any state whatever, unless called by God; but also no one may withdraw from his state and from the duties which it imposes; for he would thereby disturb the order established by God. We should be firm and constant where He Himself has placed us, and remain there according to His good pleasure. This is the first foundation of our hope of salvation; it is the supreme consolation of the upright heart seeking God purely and sincerely. I am where it has pleased God to place me: He is the Author and Master of my life; to Him alone it belongs to direct its duties and employments. “I am in Thy hands, O Lord, as clay in the hands of the potter” (Jer. XVIII, 6); turn me, place me where it shall please Thee, do with me according to Thy will. Let what Thou hast ordained in heaven, be accomplished: all my glory is to obey Thee and to follow Thee forever.

II. POINT.

If, in order to be a good tree, we must be where God places us; to bear good fruit, we must do what God wills. "He will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. II, 4); but He calls them to salvation by different means. He has established different states; He makes the little and the great, and takes equal care of all; He gives to each one the graces necessary and suitable to his vocation, to enable him to fulfil his duties worthily. The fruits which He demands, are the good works proper to the situation in which it has pleased His providence to place us. Let him who is destined to command, do it with meekness, with wise and charitable consideration, putting himself in the place of his subject. Let the subject obey heartily, promptly and cheerfully, as obeying the Lord Himself. Let each one sanctify himself, making his vocation sure by the practice of good works (2 Pet. I, 10), which are the fruit of obedience.

III. POINT.

Finally, to render the fruit excellent, we must not only be where God wills, and do what He orders, but also accomplish it in the manner that He wills, when and how He pleases, and only because it pleases Him. Do well what is good, do justly what is just (Deut. XVI, 20), with a heart full of love, which consults only God, which is attentive only to what God wills and desires, which conforms itself to it with loving complacency, which obeys, not as a hireling or a slave, through fear of punishment or a hope of reward, but as a son full of loving and lively gratitude towards the best of fathers, who finds his pleasure in pleasing Him, and delights in studying His wishes, in order to anticipate and follow them: this is what is called bringing forth

good fruit. O my God, who dost vouchsafe to nourish me with Thyself in the Blessed Sacrament, come into me, or cause me to enter into Thee, and produce fruits worthy of Thee (John XV, 8).

Monday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Exhortation to a true conversion.

I. POINT.

*“As you have yielded your members to serve iniquity,
so now yield them to serve justice unto sanctifi-
cation.”*
(Rom. VI, 19.)

Let us here learn from St. Paul, that God, whose goodness surpasses the malice of the sinner, does not despise the worthless remains of a criminal life, when we expiate it by sincere penance, and make the unreserved sacrifice of a truly contrite heart; that when we offer it to Him, God never rejects what had served for iniquity and been immolated to the world. Thus the heart that had been stained by inordinate love of the world, is purified by abandoning it, by seeking to be forgotten, unknown, even despised, if necessary. The heart which had lost itself by attachment to earthly things, restores itself to God by henceforth loving Him alone, arming itself with a holy contempt, with a just hatred of self, avenging the cause of the Lord at its own expense, renouncing all pleasures here below, to find them only in the holy severity of Christian mortification; condemning the eyes to weep, the tongue to be silent, the body to suffer, the passions to die, the mind to an eternal separation from the vain projects and thoughts of earth, finally the heart itself, to love only God, and to groan unceasingly for having loved too late the Beauty ever ancient and ever new.

II. POINT.

“As you have yielded your body to sin, so yield it now to justice.” What comparison can be made between God and the world? They are two masters which cannot be allied together: the distance that separates them is infinite, and the disproportion so immense, that no one would have dared to believe, or imagine, that God, so full of majesty and of power to render us happy, could choose to be pleased with our services, after they had been given to the world, that deceitful and cruel master, which corrupts those who love and serve it, and renders them miserable forever; yet so excessive is Thy clemency, O Lord! We have rendered ourselves unworthy of it by offending Thee, and we do not even deserve to be looked upon by Thee, but, accommodating Thyself to our weakness, Thou dost remind us that Thou art satisfied with a simple return of the heart to Thee, and that Thou dost not demand of us anything but that we should consecrate to Thy glory, O supreme Justice, what has been defiled, spoiled and corrupted by serving injustice. Thou dost say to us: You have abandoned yourselves to corruption, but come, “return to Me, be converted to Me”, My children, for I am your Father and your Friend (Jer. III, 14). Thus Thou dost speak to us, O ineffable Goodness, and Thou dost treat us as if we were Thy equals. Oh, who could help loving Thee! Who would not wish to have a thousand lives to consecrate them all to Thee!

III. POINT.

God, infinitely worthy to be served for love of Himself, nevertheless wishes us to find our own interest in His love, as St. Paul shows us by these words: “When you were the servants of sin, what fruit had you then

in those things?" (Rom. VI, 20). Only shame and confusion. Of what use was it to deceive yourselves, to disguise your iniquity, to satisfy a blind passion of pride, of revenge, of avarice or ambition? What remains to you but trouble, regret and remorse for having been unfaithful to your God? Let us blush, let us humble ourselves, let us be ashamed of our wanderings; let us look back upon them with sorrow, let us leave them forever; for "the wages of sin is death". But if we free ourselves from its bondage to serve God, working justice, we shall have as the reward and fruit of our good works, holiness and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The world, the flesh, the devil destroy their votaries forever: God saves His forever; can we hesitate between Him and them? My God, I wish to be Thine, and Thine alone without reserve!

Tuesday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

How to produce good fruit.

I. POINT.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit."

(*Mat. VII, 18.*)

The good tree meant here is a good will, which is charity: this tree, this excellent root can produce only excellent fruit. Works good exteriorly, are not always good before God, who sounds the hearts: they are often common to the just and sinners; but what distinguishes them, and gives them their value, their merit and their price, is the charity which animates them. Change your hearts, and your works will be changed; from bad they will become good. Custom, interest, the fear of displeasing men, the desire to win their approbation, hypocrisy, vain glory; in a word, self-love, an evil and

fatal tree, was the source of the works commonly called good, and these different motives were, at the same time, the worm which destroyed them, and the decay which corrupted them. For this fatal love substitute charity, divine love, and you will avoid the misfortune of which St. Paul speaks: "They have an appearance of godliness without", but they have no virtue within (2 Tim. III, 5).

II. POINT.

If our heart has become a good tree, if it is perfectly purified and emptied of all self-love, if charity has taken its place, let us preserve this divine plant and cultivate it with care, lest it should degenerate and become barren and unfruitful. Let us unite vigilance to prayer; for whence proceed so many imperfect fruits, so many inconsiderate and disedifying actions and words, if not from the irregularities of our heart, over which we do not watch sufficiently, notwithstanding the important counsel of the Holy Ghost: "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it" (Prov. IV, 23). St. Jerome adds, that error in words arises from error in the heart. Let us watch, then, and unite to watchfulness prayer, according to the warning of Jesus: "Watch ye and pray" (Mat. XXVI, 41). Pray often, for "unless God keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. CXXVI, 1). Let us pray with fervor, saying with David: O God, "Thou shalt set aside a free rain of graces, for souls who are Thy inheritance" (Ps. LXVII, 10); they are weak, but Thou wilt strengthen them, Thou wilt pour on them the sweetness of Thy heavenly influence, and the land shall bring forth good fruit.

III. POINT.

The good tree, which represents a heart burning with the love of God, bears good fruit; but it must bear

always. Our Lord cursed the barren fig tree, because He found it without fruit. As it was not the season to gather fruit, He did this to teach us, that we ought, at all times, to produce the fruits of virtue and good works. The faithful heart is figured by the tree in the Apocalypse, which bore abundant fruits every month (Apoc. XXII, 2); thus we ought to practise good always, and in all conditions of life, in affliction and in the severest trials, as in the sweetness of consolation, in scarcity and adversity, as in abundance and in prosperity. We ought to grow unceasingly, we ought always to advance from virtue to virtue, carefully rooting out the thorns, the tares, the weeds, lest they should choke the good seed. "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (Mat. VII, 16). The Wise Man says: "The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns (Prov. XV, 19) and thistles," because, being slothful, they do not labor to pull them out: the way of the just, on the contrary, is beautiful and perfectly smooth, because they are careful to root out the brambles and thorns as soon as they appear.

Wednesday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Man's fall and restoration.

I. POINT.

"A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Mat. VII, 18).

Good is before evil, the good tree before the bad, good grain before the tares; for "God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. I, 31). So grace is before sin, heaven before hell, the love of God before self-love. The devils were angels, for God created them good; He made man upright, just and innocent, He placed him as a good tree in an earth-

ly paradise, to bring forth fruits of justice and holiness; He adorned the land of his heart with the good plant of free-will, represented by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that he might have the merit of making a good choice; He also placed in him His holy love, as the tree of life in the midst of paradise; for, in the state of his original purity, his senses, his faculties and his powers tended only to love God, and urged him to God as his centre. O God, whose works are perfect (Gen. II, 1), what glory ought we not to render to Thee for Thy benefits!

II. POINT.

Man, by the ill use which he made of the gifts of God, from good became bad; he allowed himself to be seduced by the devil, who, tearing out of his heart the excellent tree of holy love, planted another fatal and pernicious tree, the tree of self-love. St. John makes known to us the unfortunate branches of this tree, which are "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John II, 16). The tempter caused our first parents to fall into intemperance, into the desire of knowledge and of the possession of all things, into presumption. The devil told them that they would be as gods (Gen. III, 5), and they believed him: pride destroyed them. This cursed tree is the source of all the evils which now pour their venom into our faculties, so that a sponge in the ocean is not so full of water as we are of self-love; this should make us lament like the saints, and exclaim with St. Paul: "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. VII, 24). O sin, poisonous fruit, I detest thee above all things!

III. POINT.

Man, having been seduced, corrupted the work of God; for it is the prerogative of God to produce, and of the sinner to destroy: God builds, and the sinner overthrows; God plants, and the sinner roots out: a fatal opposition of our malice to His goodness, of our ingratitude to His love! O unhappy power to do evil, which should humble us profoundly! But God, who made us good, came to repair His work by destroying the works of the devil. He came, in His turn, to root out, to destroy and to scatter, that He might afterwards plant, restore and rebuild (Jer. XXXI, 28); to crush the works of the enemy, and to give life to His works; to root out the poisonous tree of self-love, and re-plant the tree of His love. O Jesus, labor alone in me, according to Thy power and goodness: may all that is not from Thee, disappear, perish and be exterminated, that Thou alone mayst live and reign in me forever!

Thursday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

It behooves us to bring forth good fruit.

I. POINT.

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.”

(Mat. VII, 19.)

Love, if it is sincere, is never idle. It is not more natural for fire to burn, and for the sun to give light, than it is for true love to produce its heat and light, that is, to make God known and loved; and as the tree is worth nothing if it bears no fruit, so love is false and imaginary, is not a real love, if it does not produce good works; therefore Christ adds: “You shall know them by their fruits” (Mat. VII, 20). The beloved disciple says: “Let us not love only in word, but in deed and

in truth'' (1 John III, 18). May love make us strive to avoid sin; for to love and to offend God are incompatible with each other: afterwards, may it make us practise virtue and good works, that we may say with Christ: I love the Father, ''therefore I always do the things that are pleasing to Him'' (John VIII, 29).

II. POINT.

Our Lord says: ''The tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire''; and in the parable of the fig tree which yielded no fruit, He said: ''Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'' (Luke XIII, 7). Grace is a good tree planted in us by God, and from which He expects fruits: it is necessary and important to rekindle, or to re-awaken grace, too often slumbering, because of our negligence, that we may co-operate with it fully, and yield the fruits which God has a right to expect. It is not enough to preserve the talent which is confided to us; it is given to us to put at interest, we must make it profitable and multiply it. A lamp, for want of oil, dies out; thus the soul that does not correspond to the grace which it receives, is in great danger of losing it, and of being cast into eternal fire, as a withered and barren tree. O Lord, who hast given me grace, and merited it for me, come Thysself from the altar, which is the throne of grace, to preserve, increase and perfect it in me.

III. POINT.

The tree is cultivated and watered by the gardener, but God alone gives the increase: thus grace must be cultivated by our faithful co-operation, and watered by our labors; but it is God who blesses it and gives the increase by new graces. ''He that planteth and watereth is nothing, it is God who giveth the increase'', and who

is everything (1 Cor. III, 7). The work of our salvation depends on the goodness of God; for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that showeth mercy" (Rom. IX, 16). Nevertheless, He wishes us to will and to run, that we may water and cultivate with as much care, as if all the success depended on our efforts. St. Augustine says, that, although God created us without us, He will not save us without us. Let us labor with the full conviction that grace, the precious treasure which is worth to us an eternity of glory, is not due to our merits; that, being borne in earthen vessels (2 Cor. IV, 7), God alone, who has given it to us purely through His mercy, can preserve it.

Friday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

The fruits of the good tree.

I. POINT.

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. and every evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

(Mat. VII, 17.)

Jesus Christ our Saviour came down from heaven to repair our losses to our greater advantage, and to plant in us the excellent tree of His holy love: a divine tree, which sends forth three salutary branches, opposed to the three pernicious branches which the evil tree produces. To the first branch, which is the concupiscence of the flesh, Jesus opposes continual mortification, which St. Paul recommends to us to bear always in our bodies (2 Cor. IV, 10). Our Saviour teaches it to us by these words, Take up your cross daily, and follow Me (Luke IX, 23); and still more efficaciously by His example, since He led a life not only passible, but always suffering and crucified. O Cross of Jesus, instrument

of His sorrows, throne of His patience, may I be fastened and nailed to thee with Him! (Gal. II, 19). Mortify, crucify my flesh, and enable me to partake of the unction hidden under the holy austerities of penance.

II. POINT.

To the concupiscence of the eyes, or the inordinate desire for earthly goods; to avarice, which St. Paul calls the "root of all evils" (1 Tim. VI, 10), Jesus opposes poverty in spirit, which He praises and rewards by giving it the kingdom of heaven (Mat. V, 3); poverty in spirit, which consists in using the things of this world, as if we used them not, remembering how quickly the figure of this world passes away (1 Cor. VII, 31); a poverty to which Jesus invites us by His birth, His life and His death, which were only a school for this excellent virtue. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mat. V, 3); but still more blessed are they who join to it real poverty, leaving all to follow Jesus, who became poor, that He might make us rich! Blessed is he who hears and understands these words pronounced by God Himself: I will not that those who serve Me in My temple, should have any inheritance, because I Myself will be their possession (Deut. X, 9). Blessed are they who glory in saying with David: "The Lord is my portion and my inheritance", He is my only good forever (Ps. XV, 5).

III. POINT.

To pride, the source of all vices, and "the beginning of all sin" (Eccli. X, 15), Jesus opposes interior abnegation and humility, the solid foundation and fruitful cause of all virtue. To lead us to this, His supreme Majesty did not disdain to humble Himself to us and in us, even to the death of the cross, after hav-

ing lived in continual abasement. St. Peter says: God wished "to leave us an example that we might follow His steps" (1 Pet. II, 21); and Jesus Himself, after His inconceivable humility in washing the feet of the apostles, and even those of the traitor Judas, adds: "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done" (John XIII, 15). O Jesus, imprint Thy humility in my heart, expel from it all pride; subdue, and root out all self-love, substituting in its stead a perfect love for Thy holy Person.

Saturday after the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Desires alone do not suffice for salvation.

I. POINT.

"Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father." (Mat. VII, 21.)

St. Bernard says the way to hell is paved with good intentions; heaven is full of good works; good works alone lead to it. They who say Lord, Lord, without loving the Lord, and without laboring for His glory by doing His will, have, at the most, only good desires; but these desires are fruitless for salvation, because they are inefficacious. They are like sycamore trees, which have large leaves, but as they never bear fruit, they are fit only for the fire. The desire of the slothful man kills his soul, according to the words of the Holy Ghost, because such desires, called by the holy Fathers 'velleities', are as lights which show the way, motions which excite one to follow it, but which only add to the guilt of the slothful man, who, contenting himself with them, closes his eyes to these lights, and resists the motions of grace knocking at the door of his heart. Blessed is he, who, receiving grace, obeys it and produces fruit!

Blessed is the truly faithful soul, who, desiring justice, embraces it and follows it. God will give to the just the accomplishment of their desires, and they will not be disappointed in their expectation (Ps. XX, 3).

II. POINT.

“Not every one that saith: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Many desire heaven, many ask for it; but not all obtain it, because not all ask for it as they ought. “The Lord is near to all those who call upon Him, and He will hear them” (Ps. CXLIV, 18); but we should bear in mind that this applies only to those who invoke Him in truth. What is it to pray, or invoke the Lord in truth? It is to do what He commands, while we pray to obtain what He promises. Otherwise we ask in vain and without success. To ask for heaven, and to stray constantly from the narrow way which leads to it (Mat. VII, 14); to ask for heaven, and to be unwilling to fulfil any of the conditions prescribed to attain it, with the exception, perhaps, of those which may not conflict with our irregular desires or our passions, is to say with our lips: “Lord, Lord”, and not practically to acknowledge God as our Lord; it is to deceive ourselves and render ourselves unworthy to be heard. The glory of heaven, great and inestimable in itself, merits to be purchased at a great price; it is not for the slothful; and only those who do themselves a holy violence, bear it away (Mat. XI, 12).

III. POINT.

He shall enter into heaven, who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. All Christian philosophy is comprised in these few words. He who does the will of God is like the good tree, always and at all times, loaded with fruit; Jesus said: “He is My brother, My

sister and my mother; My Father will love him; We will come to him, and take up Our abode in him" (John XIV, 23). All these great promises are not made, all these truths are not spoken to those, who distinguish themselves by their valor, their eloquence, their knowledge, or who conquer nations; and not even to those who do wonders in the Name of Jesus, but only to those who obey Him and accomplish His will; for eternal life is in doing His will. Lord, I will meditate upon it unceasingly (Ps. CXVIII, 15), I will execute it in all things. Lead me according to Thy will, "teach me to do it always, since Thou art my God" (Ps. CX, 10).

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

God's bounty towards us.

I. POINT.

"A certain rich man had a steward" (Luke XVI, 1).

God is infinitely rich in Himself, having no need of anything, possessing the immense and inexhaustible treasures of His Divinity. O Lord, "who is like unto Thee?" (Ps. XXXIV, 10). O God our Lord, "how admirable is Thy Name in all the earth!" (Ps. VIII, 2). Thou art the Sovereign of all things, and we ought to adore Thee. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein" (Ps. XXIII, 1). Let us adore and admire the Lord our God, because He is incomparable in His riches and greatness; but let us love Him, for St. Paul says: "He is rich in mercy" (Eph. II, 4). He is rich in all His divine perfections, in wisdom, in power, in goodness; but above all, He is liberal in conferring blessings, graces and favors upon all who put their confidence in Him, who address themselves to Him, who pray to Him and invoke Him: "Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord, shall be saved" (Rom. X, 13).

II. POINT.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, is also represented by this rich man, because according to St. Paul, "though He was rich, for our sake He became poor" (2 Cor. VIII, 9). Without losing His treasures, He became not only poor, as having nothing, but indigent and having need of all things, that He might enrich us by His poverty, and load us with spiritual goods by the merit of His privations. O Jesus, we recognize all "the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God hidden in Thee", all the treasures of grace, of light, of love, of merit and of glory, in a word, all the riches of the Divinity; at the same time we confess before Thee, that we are poor, indigent, stripped of all. Remember, O Lord, that Thou didst choose to share our miseries, our indigence, and even our beggary, only to fill us, by a loving exchange, with all Thy graces and with Thyself, who art the source of all goods; come, then, in Thy Blessed Sacrament, come and fill us with Thy abundance.

III. POINT.

The steward is the man to whom God has confided His goods, not to possess the fund, but simply to enjoy the interest. He is permitted to use, but not to appropriate the goods of this world: he must render an exact account thereof to his Sovereign Lord. The prophet says: "Be not afraid, when a man shall be made rich, and when the glory of his house shall be increased. For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him" (Ps. XLVIII, 18). Here below we have nothing but the use of what is given to us: all these vain things will abandon us at death, and will rise up against us, if we do not prevent this by giving them up first, or making them serve faithfully for the glory of God and our salvation. O

my God, he who thinks often and seriously that he must die, easily despises all the most seductive offers of the world. O my God, be Thou my only treasure, and may my heart seek Thee, and rest in Thee alone.

Monday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

Give an account of thy stewardship.

I. POINT.

The steward was accused before his master of having wasted his goods, and the master said to him: "What is this that I hear of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship." We ought every day to demand of ourselves an account of our charges, of our obligations, of our vocation, of the graces received, and of the use that we have made of them; for "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. XI, 31) by God in the severity of His justice. O my soul, give an account of thy stewardship. Have we not cause to blush, to tremble, to humble ourselves, and be filled with confusion, considering the numerous graces abused, despised, wasted, destroyed and rendered vain by us. Where are the fruits of so many gifts, so many goods that we have received from God, and which cost the life and the blood of His Son? But since He gave us His Beloved Son as our Saviour in His Incarnation, and as our food in the Blessed Sacrament, in which He deigns to feed our souls with His own substance, what a rigorous account will He not demand of us!

II. POINT.

"Thou canst be steward no longer" (Luke XVI, 2). This is the penalty of sin: as soon as it is committed, God pronounces this terrible sentence against the sinner. So long as you remain in sin, you cannot merit, or do

anything worthy of Me and of eternal life. He who has abused the favors of God, deserves to be deprived of them, and becomes incapable of receiving new ones; he is driven from the house of God, and blotted out from the number of His children and servants. O misery of sin, which is the death of all past good works, which renders them vain and fruitless, and makes us unable to produce any act worthy of eternal life, so that good works and the holiest actions performed in the state of sin, can never be vivified, because they lack the source of life, which is grace. O sin, how greatly should we abhor thee!

III. POINT.

At the last judgment, a very strict examination will be made of our whole life, and God will say to us: "Give an account of thy stewardship", for thou canst no longer be steward. There will be no more time to do penance, to weep over our sins, to merit and to gain heaven. O how many moments lost during life! These lost moments will be so many poisoned darts and arrows to pierce the heart with just regret at the hour of death, and at the judgment of God, for having lost so many opportunities, neglected so many means of salvation, so many occasions of laying up treasures in heaven! "Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant" (Ps. CXLII, 2); but now, while we have time, let us follow the counsel of the Wise Man: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening" (Eccles. IX, 10).

Tuesday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.**The service of God.****I. POINT.**

"We are debtors, not to the flesh, but to the spirit."
(Rom. VIII, 12.)

We owe all to God, because we have received all from Him; we owe to the communication which He has made to us of His spirit, all the goods of grace, the first of which, according to St. Paul, is to have been delivered from sin. Those who are filled with the love of God, think with pleasure of this inestimable gift, and they never lose the remembrance of the sins which His mercy has pardoned, that a remission so full and so abundant may increase their gratitude and love, according to the words of Jesus: "Many sins shall be forgiven to him that loveth much" (Luke VII, 47). The Fathers say that every one is indebted to God for the remission of sin, the purest and most innocent souls owing Him no less for their preservation, than those who, having been stained with it, have been absolved from their sins by His goodness: this made the apostle say, very justly, that we are all God's debtors; therefore we must all love Him, since to us all He has forgiven much.

II. POINT.

"If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (Rom. VIII, 13). By the aid of the Holy Ghost man rises above carnal and earthly desires; moved by sentiments of gratitude and love for his Deliverer, for his heavenly Physician, who, not satisfied with having healed him, gives him, moreover, a reward for his cure, he determines to live no longer according to the flesh. Considering the mercy of God in having delivered him from bondage, he takes care not to sub-

ject himself to it anew, and to mortify himself, following the counsel of St. Paul; he strives to live more and more according to the spirit, and to make the spirit of God live in him by prayer, vigilance, retirement and the practice of good works: for, having always within us the law of sin, the old man who wars against the spirit, we must resist him by attaching ourselves closely to God, that, being united to Him, we may combat and conquer in His strength.

III. POINT.

“You have not received the spirit of bondage, or of fear, but of the adoption of children” (Rom. VIII, 15). If we mortify the works of the flesh, if we combat against sin, we must be urged and animated by love, and not by fear. He, who acts only through a base and servile fear, who strives to avoid only sins that would involve his ruin, who abstains from displeasing God only in things in which he would incur His hatred; he who serves God deliberately and without scruple in a cowardly, slothful and indifferent manner, has every reason to believe that charity is not in his heart; that he is only a slave that dreads punishment, and not a child that loves its father; for whoever burns with the fire of divine love, hates all that is displeasing to God, and studies to conform himself in all things to His good pleasure. Can love permit us to do evil to Him whom we love. Will this love permit us to refrain from doing the good that is in our power?

Wednesday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

What the unjust steward should do.

I. POINT.

A steward “was accused unto his master of having wasted his goods.” (Luke XVI, 1.)

If we have fallen into the misfortune of the unfaithful steward, if like him we have wasted our Master’s

goods, the first remedy that we ought to use, and the first sentiment that should move our hearts, is to regard the reproaches which God addresses to us in this life as an effect of His goodness, to excite us to avoid the punishment which we merited, and which He might have reserved for us in the next life. We ought to be filled with humble gratitude, because, instead of wishing to punish us for our infidelities, He makes us see and detest them. He fills our hearts with remorse, while we have time to profit by it, to repair our losses before the last and dreadful accounting day. With this intention He pronounces these awful but salutary words: "What is this that I hear of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke XVI, 2). O Lord, this is the favorable sign which Thou dost give to Thy beloved, that they may fly before Thy bow (Ps. LIX, 6) bent and ready to discharge the arrow of Thy just anger, of Thy terrible judgment.

II. POINT.

"What shall I do?" (Luke XVI, 3). Let us address ourselves to God Himself; and, favored by His grace, which warns us, which happily troubles us, to make us open our eyes to the danger that threatens us, let us beseech Him with a contrite heart, to grant us His light, to enlighten us in our darkness, to instruct us in our ignorance, to reclaim us in our wanderings, and to recall us to the narrow way, the way of justice, which leads to the eternal tabernacles. With David, let us say to Him unceasingly: Lord, "send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that they may guide us", and make us reach Thy holy mountain (Ps. XLII, 3), that is, holiness, the accomplishment of Thy holy laws, finally, Thy tabernacle in that blessed city in which Thou dost make Thy abode. Let us say with the Church: O just Judge, God

of vengeance, grant us remission and pardon before the coming of that day, in which we shall be summoned to the tribunal of Thy justice to render an account of our works.

III. POINT.

“What shall I do?” Would to God that men were wise, that they had sufficient understanding to foresee the future, that they would reflect seriously on the account that they must render to God, and on what they may now do to appease Him and secure His favor. For, after having listened to His voice, acknowledged His goodness, implored His mercy, we should think of the means to satisfy His justice, to restore to Him what we have lost and wasted; we should excite ourselves to a compunction proportioned to the greatness of our sins; we should have recourse to penance, which is perfected only by affliction and humiliation of heart; we should renounce the false shame which causes penance to be feared by those who have not feared to offend God. St. Augustine makes use of this reproach: You do not blush for your wounds, and you blush to use the remedy which would heal them! Finally, we must pour our possessions into the lap of the poor (Eccli. VII, 36), that we may restore to God, what we have stolen from Him by the abuse of His grace; for, as water extinguishes fire, so “alms delivereth from all sin” (Tob. IV, 11), effaces it, frees from death and obtains eternal life.

Thursday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

What we have to account for.

I. POINT.

“Give an account of thy stewardship.”

(Luke XVI, 2.)

We do not possess any good which we have not received from God, and we are not proprietors, but

only the dispensers of all that He has given us. We are accountable to Him, and a day will come, in which we must render a very strict account of our stewardship. St. Paul says: "It is required of the dispensers" of the gifts of God, "that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. IV, 2). Let us here apply the counsel of the same apostle: Let every one prove and examine himself (1 Cor. XI, 28), that he may not be surprised at the last day, like the steward of the Gospel; for "the day of the Lord will come" suddenly. He Himself "will come as a thief in the night" (1 Thes. V, 2); and when the sinner shall think himself in security, death will suddenly overtake him. Therefore, let us not slumber; but let us watch and be sober. Our Lord says: "Watch ye, and pray"; keep yourselves ready, that, having given a good account to your Master, He may establish you over all His goods (Luke XII, 44), and that, having dispensed them faithfully on earth, they may become yours by a perpetual enjoyment in heaven.

II. POINT.

God has given us the goods of nature; He gave us our being, and in giving it to us, He made us capable of knowing and loving Him. For this end we have received from Him understanding, will, strength, and mental and corporal faculties, and all these benefits ought to be so employed for Him, that it would be theft to apply them to any other use. All should serve for His glory, all should be directed to the Sovereign Creator, who made us for Himself, who alone is worthy to occupy our minds and our hearts, who should be the only end of our actions and of our whole life, as He is its Source, its Author and its Preserver. Woe to us if we alienate the goods of our Master, to pass them into strange hands for the benefit of His enemies (Mark

XIII, 35). Yet we do this every day; when we sin, we turn His own benefits against the Most High, and we make use of the gifts of His love and liberality only to offend Him: therefore He reproaches us by the prophet: "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised Me" (Is. I, 2). O foolish people, is this, what you render to your God? Is He not your Father? Has He not created us? Why do you irritate Him by sacrificing to strange gods? You have abandoned the God who gave you life, you have forgotten the Lord who created you.

III. POINT.

If God, in creating man, assumed the character of Lord to make him feel that he had a master; if in establishing him over the works of His hands, He obliged him to give a faithful account of the management of His benefits, what will He demand for the more excellent gifts, which He has confided to him, the treasures of grace and glory which He purchased for him at so high a price? If I owe myself entirely to Thee, O Lord, because Thou hast created me; if I ought to use the goods of nature for Thy glory, what shall I render to Thee for those of grace, and the redemption? God so loved us, as to give us His only-begotten Son (John III, 16), and did not spare Him, but delivered Him to death, in order to deliver us from death (Rom. VIII, 32). One day He will demand of us an account of His Blood, according to the expression of Ezechiel (III, 20); He will seek Him in our hands, that is, He will ask us what works of penance, of conversion, of piety, His Blood has made us produce; He will judge us for the shedding of the Blood, which in the sacraments has so often washed us, purified us, nourished us, quenched our

thirst, and inebriated us so deliciously at the altar. What fruits of justice and holiness ought we not to gather, to present them to Him?

Friday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

What is the unjust steward to do?

I. POINT.

The steward said within himself: "What shall I do?"
(*Luke XVI, 3.*)

The sinner has abandoned God, and God has abandoned him. What will become of this negligent and ungrateful servant, who has wasted the goods of his Master, who has not profited by the talent of grace? What will he do, to whom will he have recourse? Let him rise above himself, and say with David: "I have lifted mine eyes to the mountains, from whence cometh my help" (Ps. CXX, 1), that is, to the saints and to the mountain, which is called pre-eminently the mountain above the mountains, the heavenly Mary. "My help is from the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth" (Ps. CXX, 2). With so many and such powerful intercessors, I venture to address myself to the Lord Himself, to Him, whose treasures are inexhaustible, and who is rich in mercy to pardon (Joel II, 13). Woe to me, because I have sinned much and grievously in my life! But what shall I do? Whither shall I fly, miserable that I am, if not to Thee, my God, whose clemency is boundless, and whose goodness still surpasses my malice.

II. POINT.

"What shall I do?" This is the first thought of the sinner occupied with his salvation. "The whole earth is made desolate, because there is none that considereth in his heart" (Jer. XII, 11). The true peni-

tent considers, thinks, meditates, reflects upon the eternal truths, upon his perilous state. This was also the first step in the conversion of the prodigal son; entering into himself, he thought and said: "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger" (Luke XV, 17). Thus the sinner begins by deliberating: What shall I do? Soon, he no longer deliberates, but resolves to leave sin, to return to God with his whole heart; he has recourse to Him, and seeing that elsewhere he can find no recourse, no hope or favor, he prepares for a perfect conversion by the confession of his sins, saying with the penitent king: "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord" (Ps. XXXI, 5).

III. POINT.

"What shall I do?" Sometimes this word is a cry of despair; it will burst from the mouth of the damned, when he shall receive the sentence of his condemnation. After his crime Cain said to God: "Thou dost drive me from the face of the earth, and I shall see Thy face no more" (Gen. IV, 14). Thus the guilty soul will be driven on the day of judgment from the face of heaven and earth, from the company of the angels and saints, from the sweet and salutary presence of Jesus Christ and His holy Mother, finally, from the eternal and blessed vision of the Divinity. Where shall this miserable one hide himself? Whither shall he turn his steps? He can no longer labor, or do good works, he will be ashamed to beg (Luke XVI, 3), he will not dare to address himself to the Blessed Virgin or the saints, whom he will see irritated against him, pronouncing his condemnation. For him the door of mercy will be closed forever; for him there will remain only despair and eternal confusion. Let us avert this terrible fate

by laboring while it is still in our power, let us expiate our offences, and implore the clemency of our Judge with an humble and truly contrite heart. He still gives us free access to the throne of His grace and goodness; let us profit thereby, let us not lose these precious moments which, for our misfortune, can never return.

Saturday after the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

Charity, the spirit of the New Law.

I POINT.

“You have not received the spirit of bondage” as in former times. (Rom. VIII, 15.)

The carnal Jews sought God to obtain from Him temporal benefits, and therefore they did not honor Him with a voluntary love, but served Him only through servile fear. St. Augustine says: God is adored and honored only by those who love Him. All the saints of the Old Law, the patriarchs, the prophets, who loved God purely and who burned with zeal for His glory, were ministers of the Old Testament and heirs of the New. They were truly Christians, although they did not bear the name: on the contrary, how many of those who bear this august name, have neither the spirit nor the virtue of a Christian, and live under the law of liberty as slaves; received among the children of God, they have only a mercenary attachment for Him, and all their love and desires are for the world, although the beloved disciple assures us that “if any man loveth the world, the love of God is not in him” (1 John II, 15).

II. POINT.

“We have received the spirit of adoption of sons of God, whereby we cry Abba, Father” (Rom. VIII, 15). This cry is formed by the heart, and not by the tongue,

it penetrates and makes itself heard in the ears of God, who is pleased with the language of love. The apostle exhorts us to this interior and sincere love, and wishes us to serve God by the motive of this love; for all that is not animated by it, is not worthy of Him, and cannot long subsist. He who is impelled only by fear, accuses himself of his sins and disorders, it is true, but does he always lay aside his affection for them? This affection can only be destroyed by charity. Charity makes true penitents; it leads them to sincere repentance, which consists not only in weeping over past sins, but in avoiding others which would cause us future tears.

III. POINT.

Charity distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil. He who does not serve God with the spirit of adoption of the sons of the heavenly Father, of which St. Paul speaks; who has not in his heart the filial respect which the heavenly Father so justly merits; who is attached only to himself and to earthly goods, cannot be disposed to praise God in adversity as in prosperity. When God afflicts him, he gives way to distrust and murmurs. The mark of a true child of God is to be attached to Him in all the circumstances of life, to confide in Him, to hope in Him even against hope, with the full conviction that He orders all, not only with wisdom, but with goodness, and for our greater advantage; it is to say boldly with David: "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be ever in my mouth" (Ps. XXXIII, 2); as well in adversity, as amid the greatest prosperity, because the Lord, who has given, is the same who now takes away (Job I, 21), and therefore He is always equally worthy to be blessed and loved. "For, if we have received good things from His hand, why shall we not receive evil things?" (Job II,

10). My God, implant these sentiments in my heart, and may they be the proof of my love for Thee.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

God's visits to us.

I. POINT.

"Thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

(Luke XIX, 44.)

God visits us in many ways, and always in His mercy. Nothing is more dangerous than not to recognize Him. "They have denied the Lord and have said: It is not the Lord" (Jer. V, 12). The unfaithful spouse, having neglected to listen to Him and to open the door, complained long before she found Him. God visits us interiorly by His grace and the motions of the Holy Spirit. This divine Spirit sometimes reproves us and reproaches us for our infidelities, sometimes instructs us by showing us what is good, and urging us to do it, animating us and encouraging us to follow Him. He is always at the door of our hearts, and He never ceases to enlighten us, to invite us and urge us to open to Him. His inspirations move us, but after we have felt them distinctly, they leave us free to follow or to refuse their attraction (St. Francis de Sales). They who despise these divine invitations, should attribute all their unhappiness to their own malice; for in vain do we receive the visit of God knocking at the door of our heart, if we refuse to Him the entrance and consent of our heart; our condemnation will be, that the light came and we preferred the darkness (John III, 19). Let us be guided by this supreme light which exhorts us and says to us: "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light" (John XII, 36).

II. POINT.

God visits us by a special grace in the sacraments, above all in that which is pre-eminently called holy, because it not only gives us sanctifying grace, but the Holy of holies and the Author of all grace, Jesus Christ our Lord, who really descends into us, visits us and favors us with His presence. What effects ought not His presence to produce in us, since, shut up in His Mother's womb, entering into Zachary's house, our divine Saviour diffused grace and the fulness of the Holy Ghost. Simeon, having had the happiness to see, and to hold in his arms the Salvation of Israel, asks God to let him depart from this world, because he had no longer anything to desire here below. The same Lord dwells in the midst of us, in our temples; we possess Him within us in a still more intimate manner than did this blessed old man. Why are we not burning with the divine fire which consumed him? Why are we not, like him, detached from all that is not God, and entirely filled with His spirit? Come, Lord Jesus, visit my soul, "the vine which Thy right hand hath planted" (Ps. LXXIX, 15); "perfect it". May Thy presence purify it, vivify it, and sanctify it entirely; come, Lord, and may Thy visit fill my heart and my mind.

III. POINT.

God visits us in general by public calamities and the miseries to which this life is subject. He visits us individually by personal afflictions, by the loss of property, of health, of relatives and friends. These are the visits of God, sad and afflicting, but salutary; these are the scourges of a father, who chastises his children, and not the sentence of death which the Supreme Judge pronounces against the guilty. God Himself says: I will visit them with scourges in my hand to chastise

them for their offences, I will not withdraw My mercy from them (Ps. LXXXVIII, 33, 34). Let us now receive cheerfully the correction of our Father, that He may one day admit us to share the inheritance of His children. Let us recognize the precious time, the favorable moments in which He invites us, in His goodness, and, what is the same thing, in His paternal severity. Let us profit by these invitations, let us use them for our amendment, lest, irritated by our ingratitude, He should visit us in His wrath, and "chastise us in His anger" (Ps. VI, 1). Let us act in such a manner, that we may be able to say with David: "We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us: for the years in which we have seen evils" (Ps. LXXXIX, 15).

Monday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

Compassion for our enemies.

I. POINT.

"Jesus, seeing the city of Jerusalem, wept over it."
(Luke XIX, 41.)

Jesus seems to forget Himself, to be moved only by the misfortunes of an ungrateful city, which He had loaded with His benefits, and which deserved to lose them because of its frightful obduracy. Jerusalem was about to crown its iniquity by a deicide; it was about to put to death the very Author of life. Jesus, foreseeing this, wept, and by His tears teaches us the compassion we ought to have for our own enemies, when, offending us and seeking to destroy us, they destroy themselves, or at least do themselves greater harm. Whatever ill-treatment we may receive, can never be compared to that which the Son of God endured. Yet He is just, and we are sinners; He is the Holy of holies, and we are criminals. Let us learn, then, from Him,

not to hate those who hate us, not to render evil for evil, but to love them, to pray and weep for them, and to interest ourselves in their salvation.

II. POINT.

St. Augustine says, that they who, through unjust passion, rise up against us, should instruct us rather than irritate us. There is no sin, however enormous, committed by others, which we may not ourselves commit, if we are not sustained by the hand of Him, who created us. What restrains us, what prevents us from sliding down the unhappy descent of sin, from following the deceitful allurements of our passions and evil desires, if not the almighty grace of God, who, by a just judgment, abandons the sinner to the irregularities of his heart? (Rom. I, 28). St. Ignatius, being led to martyrdom by soldiers so wicked that he calls them leopards, said nevertheless, that their iniquity taught him many things. But what could this great saint learn from the pitiless cruelty of these barbarous men, except that God could render them as holy as he, and that he himself, abandoned by grace, could become as wicked as they. To Thee alone be given all the glory, O Lord, because Thou hast sustained me by Thy right hand, and, instead of abandoning me to my own corruption, "Thou hast led me according to Thy will" (Ps. LXXII, 24).

III. POINT.

We ought to love our enemies, and, after the example of Jesus, to be more moved with compassion than with hatred for all that they do against us. If you are careful to live well and to please God, said the prince of the apostles, where is he, who can injure you? (1 Pet. III, 13). The goods they take from you, will be changed for you into lasting treasures; the honor

which they snatch from you, will merit for you true honor, unchangeable and unending. It is the incomparable advantage of those who serve God, that no one can take away their happiness, since no one can deprive them of the sovereign good which alone renders them happy. St. Augustine says, that God is a treasure, and that he who possesses it, cannot be deprived of it by force: we lose it only when we ourselves will it, since an earnest desire is sufficient to acquire it. O Lord, no one will ever have the terrible misfortune of losing Thee, unless he has the cowardice to abandon Thee.

Tuesday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should seek God alone.

I. POINT.

"We should not covet evil things" (1 Cor. X, 6).

Do not desire a thing which is bad or forbidden, do not desire too eagerly a thing which is even good in itself. The Israelites in the desert, not satisfied with the heavenly nourishment which God provided for them, sighed inordinately for the flesh-pots of Egypt (Exod. XVI, 3). Very far from imitating them, we ought to be contented with the portion which God has given us of earthly goods; we ought not to attach ourselves to any creature with the inordinate attachment of him who loves a thing as his own. God is the sovereign and only good which it is lawful for us to desire, and to the possession of which we should unceasingly aspire. He who desires anything besides God, and not for God, does not love God as he ought (St. Francis de Sales). Let us not abase ourselves so far as to love anything that is less than God, since we are permitted to say with David: "The Lord is my portion and my inheritance" (Ps. XV, 5); and with the Spouse: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Cant. II, 16).

II. POINT.

Let us not fall into idolatry (1 Cor. X, 7). Let us beware of deceiving ourselves and believing that to be idolaters, we must adore a golden calf or some other visible idol: all irregular love of creatures is a kind of idolatry, and St. Paul declares that avarice is a worship of idols. We say in ordinary conversation: these people idolize their children, that man idolizes his body, another his mind and his intellect; and these expressions are correct; for what is it to idolize? It is to render to the creature what is due only to God. If we offend Him to satisfy a passion, an interest, a friend, we love ourselves, or this friend, with a love of preference which is due only to God; by an abominable injustice we transfer to the creature the honor, the love which we owe to the Creator. O Lord, who art called "a jealous God" (Exod. XX, 5), I beseech Thee to be jealous of my heart; do not permit in it a division injurious to Thy glory, and, since it is Thine, possess it entirely. May it love and serve Thee alone forever.

III. POINT.

Murmur not against God (1 Cor. X, 10), nor against men, especially if they are your superiors, because such a murmur is addressed to God, as Moses declares, saying: "Your murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord" (Exod. XVI, 8). We murmur, when we contradict without just reason the will of others, and the orders of superiors; when we judge and condemn their conduct. Therefore St. Paul said: "Do ye all things, without murmurings or hesitations" (Phil. II, 14). All authority comes from God, and is ordained by Him. They who oppose it, resist God and draw on themselves damnation (Rom. XIII, 1). The Jews who murmured, were exterminated by the destroying angel

(Judith VIII, 25). Mary, or Miriam, the sister of Moses, was struck with leprosy and banished from the camp of Israel, for having murmured against her brother (Num. XII, 14). All these things were figures for our instruction; for by these exterior and terrible chastisements we learn to avoid the still more dreadful punishments which God reserves for those rebellious hearts, that rise up and murmur against His ministers, notwithstanding His prohibition through His prophet: "Touch not Mine anointed" (Ps. CIV, 15); respect them, because they are consecrated to Me, and are clothed with My authority.

Wednesday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.

I. POINT.

Jesus, "seeing the city, wept over it."

(Luke XIX, 41).

Jesus wept, because He foresaw the destruction of this flourishing city, the "princess of the provinces" (Lam. I, 1), honored by so many privileges, and the seat of the true religion. He wept over the overthrow of this august temple, sanctified by His presence, and respected by all the nations; finally, He wept over the pillage, the chains, and the calamities which were ready to burst upon His chosen people, and, addressing Himself to them, He said, weeping: Oh, "if thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace" (Luke XIX, 42). O love of Jesus for these ungrateful people, a love which, through His excessive mercy, becomes more ardent in proportion to their obstinacy. Let us enter into the sentiments of Jesus; let us clothe ourselves with His compassion; let us learn from Him to weep over the miseries of our brethren, to feel for

even their temporal misfortunes, to relieve and assist them after the example of our divine Saviour, who, through His goodness, endeavors to soften their hard hearts, and to make them avoid the evils which threaten them.

II. POINT.

The principal cause of the tears of Jesus was the blindness of the Jews, the poisonous result of their sins, which had reached their height; a blindness which rendered them unworthy of the mercy of God. Above all, He wept over the enormous crime which they were premeditating in their hearts, the deicide they were about to commit in His Person, finally, the obduracy of these perfidious people even to the end of the world: the frightful state of a nation whom He loved, filled His soul with mortal sadness, even unto agony; but if He wept over Jerusalem, on the occasion of His triumphal entrance, we shall see Him a few days later in the Garden of Olives, and on the Cross, shedding His blood, no longer over a single city, or a single nation, but over all men for whom He suffered and died. O Jesus, make me find a source of regret and contrition in Thy tears, my salvation in Thy Blood, and my life in Thy death.

III. POINT.

The desolation of Jerusalem can give only a faint idea of evils that will never end! O Lord, said the prophet, Thine arrows pass, and however sharp they may be, the stroke which they give is only as a flash, but Thy thunder, the frightful voice of Thy judgments upon the damned, continues as an interminable circle, always revolving in the wheel of Thy just indignation, beginning where it ends (Ps. LXXVI, 19). O motive more than sufficient for Jesus not only to shed tears,

but also to pour forth all His blood, for He weeps, He suffers and dies upon the Cross, to deliver us no longer from temporal miseries, but from the eternal damnation which all mankind would incur. Who will give me to suffer and to die with Him and for Him! Who will grant me to weep as He wept, and by my tears to reap the fruit of His tears, holy, precious, and worthy to wash away all the sins of the world!

Thursday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

Necessity of self-mistrust, and of trust in God in temptation.

I. POINT.

“Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall.”
(1 Cor. X, 12.)

Many already fallen felicitate themselves, thinking they are standing, either because they deceive themselves through a presumptuous pride, or because they are misled by false praise and base flattery. St. Thomas says that no one, however strong he may feel, should promise himself with certainty, that he will be eternally happy; we must, therefore, work out our salvation with humility, fear and trembling (Phil. II, 12). Let us not exalt ourselves because of the good that we do; let us not disparage others because of the evil that we see in them; to fall, it is often sufficient to believe that we are standing, to prefer ourselves to others, and to rely on our own strength. He, who confides in himself, falls very soon, if he has not already fallen, and no more frightful falls are seen than those of persons, who, far from distrusting their weakness, imagine that they can never fall; the most ordinary cause of great irregularities is the pride which prevents us from fearing them. O my God, fill us with the knowledge of our misery and weakness, and then we shall be strong.

II. POINT.

“Let no temptation take hold on you, but such as is human” (1 Cor. X, 13). Does not St. Paul mean to tell us by this expression, that we have as yet suffered only ordinary temptations, easy to bear and proportioned to the weakness of human nature? Does not this passage refer to this other: “You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin”? (Heb. XII, 4). He speaks to us thus, to prepare us for greater trials, and that we may not boast of having manfully overcome slight temptations. He wishes us to consider what the saints have suffered—bloody persecutions, countless afflictions, tortures, cruelties which hell alone could invent. He wishes us to compare our trials with those of these heroes of Christianity, and to humble ourselves in our sufferings, that we may thereby preserve the fruit of our labors and pains, and after having been faithful in a few things, that we may be established over many things (Mat. XXV, 21).

III. POINT.

“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. X, 13). God protects and sustains by His powerful hand those who look up to Him as their only support: therefore St. Paul, confiding in the divine assistance, boldly defied all creatures to separate him from the charity of Jesus Christ (Rom. VIII, 35); he feared neither their efforts nor their threats, saying: “If God be for us, who is against us?” (Rom. VIII, 31). Jesus said: “My sheep hear My voice . . . and I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish forever” (John X, 27, 28). Like faithful sheep, let us remain attached to our Good Shepherd, with Him we can fear

nothing. What can we fear, when He takes in hand our defence! But if we stray from Him, if we leave Him, we shall soon be the prey of the infernal wolf. O Jesus, sustain me with Thy hand, lest I fall; place me near Thee, O Lord, or come Thyself to me in Thy Sacrament, and then let who will attack me; I shall triumph in Thy strength, and my enemies will be defeated and confounded.

Friday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

Why Jesus weeps.

I. POINT.

Jesus entering into Jerusalem (Luke XIX, 41), in the midst of the public joy and the acclamations of the people, wept. He alone wept, He who alone seemed to have reason to rejoice, since this festival was in His honor. Jesus wept, to teach us how little we should esteem the joys and prosperity of this world, so short, so uncertain, and so changeable. Often, according to the saying of the Holy Ghost, "laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. XIV, 13); thus Jesus is received with acclamations and cries of joy in the very city, from which five days later He will be driven forth to die on an infamous gibbet. Now He is received as the Messiah, and in a little while He will be condemned as a criminal. What reward must they who love the world, expect from it, since it is so ungrateful, so perfidious to its supreme Benefactor! O good Jesus, grant that, amid the vanities and varieties of this perverse world, our hearts may be fixed where only true and lasting joys are to be found; may we rejoice in Thee alone, since everywhere else "all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. I, 14).

II. POINT.

Jesus did not weep when the Jews persecuted Him and delivered Him to death; but He weeps now when He is received with so much honor, to show that it was not through resentment towards them, but through paternal compassion, that, foreseeing their approaching misfortunes, He shed tears of sorrow and love. David says: "The voice of God divideth the flame of fire" (Ps. XXVIII, 7), that is, the flame of true zeal from the fire of anger and revenge. O Jesus, imprint in us this true zeal with which Thou wast animated for Thy people, for those of whom they were the figure, for those who imitate them every day in their perfidious ingratitude, and whose errors and ruin made Thee shed the most bitter tears.

III. POINT.

Jesus by His tears and sorrow reveals to us the ardor of His charity and the purity of His love. He is not moved by His own interests; He weeps, not for Himself, but for a blind and senseless city: He laments over the sins and the miseries of His people, and not over the sufferings which He was to endure personally; therefore, going to be crucified, He said to the holy women: "Weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children" (Luke XXIII, 28). He said in His passion: "I have set My face as a most hard rock" before those who insulted Me; I abandoned My body to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who bruised Me with blows; "I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me and spit upon Me" (Is. L, 6, 7). But He was moved with sorrow and compassion, when He saw, in the person of the dead Lazarus, the misery to which sin had reduced man; when He looked on Jerusalem and beheld the crowning

misfortunes with which its crime would overwhelm it. O Lord, may I weep with Thee, may I weep over Thee and over myself, may I weep and shed inexhaustible torrents of tears, for having by my many evil deeds caused Thy sufferings and death.

Saturday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

We, too, should weep with Jesus.

I. POINT.

“Jesus, seeing the city, wept over it.”

(Luke XIX, 41.)

Sacred history represents our divine Saviour weeping, but never laughing, because He was loaded with “our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Is. LIII, 4). He humbled Himself even to tears, which the ancients regarded as unworthy of one superior to the multitude. Man alone can weep, because he alone is capable of sin; but Jesus, though impeccable, nevertheless wept, because He wished to expiate our iniquities, and to teach us by His example to weep over them worthily; in fact, we should weep only over our sins. He says to us: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mat. V, 5). It is infinitely more desirable to weep with Thee, O Jesus, than to rejoice with the world, according to the words which fell from Thy lips: “You shall weep, and the world shall rejoice; but your sorrow shall be changed into joy, which no man shall take from you” (John XVI, 20).

II. POINT.

And thou, Jerusalem, “if thou also hadst known” (Luke XIX, 41). These abrupt exclamations show the impetuosity of the sighs of Jesus, which do not leave Him free to express all His sorrow; for the lesser evils find adequate expressions of grief, but extreme miseries,

excessive afflictions so overwhelm us, as to deprive us of words and of the power to manifest our grief. Jesus said: "If thou hadst known." Let us endeavor to know the designs of God's goodness, and our separation from Him, His love and our malice, the grace which He offers to us, and the future trials which must infallibly follow our abuse of His grace, the shortness of this life, and the eternity of the future life. O what great things are hidden under these few words of Jesus! Who can penetrate them? O blindness, O deplorable insensibility, which lead men on and precipitate them into an abyss of miseries! Moses said: Would to God that they knew, that they understood, and would foresee the last things, death approaching, judgment inevitable, the glory or the eternal pains which are to follow.

III. POINT.

The wicked in hell will weep and groan for anguish of spirit (Wis. V, 3), but it will then be too late; in vain and with eternal despair they will weep over their unhappy birth, their sinful life, their miserable end; they will weep over their past sins, their present pains, and the eternity which is to follow; they will weep, because they have not wept; they will groan, because they can never more do profitable penance, nor have recourse to the mercy of God, and because they will be certain of two things: first, that God is very just in chastising them in His severity, and that they will never have any relief in their anguish, that despair will be their portion. Jesus says to us: If you would understand these things, if you would weep with Me now, how profitable your tears would be! A single tear from a contrite heart would suffice to extinguish the fires of the divine wrath, but these things are hidden from our eyes. And how

are they hidden from us, since Thou Thyself, O Lord, hast spoken and revealed them to us? Our iniquities form thick clouds, so that, having eyes, we see not; having ears, we hear not. O Jesus, my sweet Saviour, I conjure Thee by the tears which Thou didst shed, by the blood which Thou didst pour forth, by the charity of Thy divine Heart, to give me an attentive mind, a contrite heart and a sincere repentance.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The Pharisee and the Publican.

I. POINT.

*“The pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself:
O God, I give Thee thanks” (Luke XVIII, 11).*

Pride is a vice so much the more dangerous, as it conceals itself under the appearance of virtue, and even of humility. The pharisee whom Jesus Christ condemns, justified himself before God: in that very act there was temerity and pride, and he rendered himself guilty; “for in Thy sight, O Lord, no man living shall be justified” (Ps. CXLII, 2), and Thy mercy is the only resource for our salvation. This man gave thanks to God, it is true; but he boasted and gloried in his good works; appearing before his Physician, he spoke to Him only of his health, he said nothing of his disease, as if he had no need of a remedy; in the presence of his King, he boasted of his riches, as being loaded with them and having nothing to expect from his Lord. Therefore, Jesus declares that the publican, who confessed himself a sinner, was justified rather than he who exalted his own justice; to the latter and to those who imitate him in his pride, these words were addressed: “Thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched,

and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Apoc. III, 17).

II. POINT.

“I am not as the rest of men” (Luke XVIII, 11). What should have caused confusion and sorrow to the pharisee, was the subject of his thanksgiving; he thanks God that he is not like the publican, when he should have asked grace to imitate him in his penance and in the humiliation of his heart. Thus he who condemns his neighbor, is often more guilty than he, and is judged by God more severely: “Who art thou, that judgest thy brother?” (James IV, 13). He may be better than you; for if he was wicked yesterday, he may have become good; and you, who think yourself just, when you condemn your neighbor, whom God has not given into your charge, lose your justice, and the sentence which you pronounce, will fall back upon yourself, because you usurp the rights of God, to whom alone it belongs to judge (St. Francis de Sales). Jesus wishing to absolve the sinful woman brought to Him by the pharisees, said to them: “Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone” (John VIII, 7). Let us condemn ourselves, let us judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned and judged; let us judge no one, since “each one must render an account for himself” (Rom. XIV, 12).

III. POINT.

“This man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Luke XVIII, 14). The one stands boldly before God, the other trembles and dares not advance into the temple; the one enumerates his good actions, the other is ashamed at the remembrance of his life; the one regards his neighbor with contempt, the other despises only himself. “I am not as the rest of

men", said the pharisee. Rather let us say with the humble publican, let us say with the apostle: "I am a sinner"; if I have not committed great crimes, it is because I have been preserved by the gratuitous mercy of God. Filled with these sentiments, let us permit ourselves to be reprovèd and humbled, let us acknowledge our misery and poverty; let us desire to be enriched and justified and to experience the truth of these words: "He hath filled the hungry with good things". Woe to you, who are satisfied with your own justice, for you shall hunger! "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled" (Mat. V, 6). O Jesus, my wisdom, my justice, my treasure, and the universal remedy for all my miseries, my soul desires Thee ardently, it recognizes its need of Thee, it cannot live without Thee: do not refuse Thyself to the eagerness of my desires.

Monday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The publican, a model of repentance.

I. POINT.

"The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast."
(Luke XVIII, 13.)

This humble publican is the true model of a penitent sinner, and shows us the acts and the principal dispositions of a true penitent. He remains aside, in the lower part of the temple; he dares not approach the altar, because he believes himself a sinner, he regards himself with confusion as being farther from God than the Supreme Being is from nothing, or the highest heavens from the centre of the earth. He interiorly confesses his great misery; he thinks himself unworthy to appear before God, or to receive any favor

from Him; his only recourse is to His clemency, saying, O great God, I confess my unworthiness, and I implore Thy mercy; I acknowledge my weakness, and I adore Thy sovereign power; I feel my indigence, and I call upon Thy goodness and the riches of Thy mercy.

II. POINT.

“He would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven.” The shame and confusion which should cover the face of the sinner, arise from two sources: from the sight of his ingratitude towards God, and from a profound reverence for His sovereign Majesty. Plunged beneath the nothingness to which his sins have reduced him, he dares not look up to heaven, the witness of his offences, and still less can he lift his eyes to God; he cannot bear the overwhelming weight of His immensity, he trembles before that penetrating eye, from which nothing escapes, and which follows him everywhere, and he exclaims with the prodigal: “I have sinned against heaven and before Thee” (Luke XV, 18). Thus St. Paphnutius recommended to blessed Thais, the penitent, to expiate the immodesty of her eyes by always keeping them cast down towards the earth, without daring to raise them to heaven; he added: Because you have strayed and abandoned yourself to the pleasures of the world, you shall not leave your cell during the rest of your life, and to atone for the vanity of your speech, you shall say only these words: O Thou, who hast formed me from the slime of the earth, have pity upon me! — O my God, when shall I enter into these sentiments of true penitence?

III. POINT.

“He struck his breast.” This exterior sign expresses his perfect sorrow, and represents the interior regret of the penitent sinner, whose heart should be

broken by contrition; the sinner ought to be humbled and cast down under the weight of his shame and confusion. Holy Scripture uses these expressions to portray true penitence and sincere conversion. O Jesus, who "dost not despise a contrite and humble heart" (Ps. L, 19), pierced with keen and constant regret, place in mine the blessed dispositions of a true and perfect penance, repentance, humiliation, shame and sorrow.

Tuesday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to call Jesus our Lord.

I. POINT.

"No man speaking by the spirit of God, saith anathema to Jesus."
(1 Cor. XII, 3.)

This crime, this sacrilege, and this impiety and blasphemy, the mere mention of which fills us with horror, is, according to the Fathers, more common than we imagine: no one can pronounce it with his lips, without proclaiming himself an impious man and a blasphemer; but many, by a misfortune which cannot be sufficiently deplored, say anathema to the Lord at every moment and by their whole conduct. The life that is a continual opposition to that of Jesus and His maxims, is a renunciation of Jesus, and a public anathema against Him; for he who leads such a life, will not believe Him, nor listen to Him, and still less follow Him, imitate Him or obey Him. What master, what Lord, what father would not be offended by such contempt? O Lord, who art all this to me! I acknowledge Thee for my God and my Lord, and I will love and serve Thee, and never do anything contrary to the love and service of Thee.

II. POINT.

“No one can say, Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. XII, 3). St. Paul, wishing to make us feel how incapable we are of any good, assures us that, without the Holy Ghost, we cannot worthily call Jesus our Lord. And what is it to call Him Lord by the Holy Ghost, if not to acknowledge and love our dependence on Him, to honor Him, to obey Him, to respect Him as our Sovereign? St. Bernard says, that to call Him Lord in this way, is to confess humbly that all chaste thoughts, wise counsels, equitable judgments, and holy desires come from Jesus, as from their source. As rivers flow forth from the sea and return to it, to flow forth anew, so all the waters of grace poured into us through the merits of Jesus, or by Him, must return to Him as to their source; we should render Him thanks full of gratitude, that they may be poured upon us again in greater abundance. O Jesus, Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only art the Most High; to Thee alone, from whom we hold all, is due glory throughout immortal ages!

III. POINT.

We should thank God with simplicity of heart, and not with the duplicity of hypocrites, who, while giving Him thanks for His gifts, retain in their hearts what they give with their lips, wishing to reserve the glory for themselves. Spiritual souls are exposed to this temptation; for St. Augustine says, it is a rare virtue to do great actions without thinking ourselves great, to appear admirable to others and contemptible to ourselves; and, according to St. Bernard, humility in the midst of the greatest virtues is more wonderful than the virtues themselves. He truly calls Jesus his Lord, by the motion of the Holy Ghost, he bends the knee before

this Name, which makes heaven, earth and hell tremble, who usurps nothing from the glory of Jesus; who when it passes by him, recognizes that it is not his own; and who, far from attributing anything to himself, gives it entirely to Jesus, to whom alone it belongs. O my Saviour, may this be my manner of acting and thinking till the last moment of my life! Nothing for myself, all for Thee!

Wednesday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Humility is necessary.

I. POINT.

“Whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

(Luke XVIII, 14.)

It is a salutary thing to be humbled by God in this life; but it is a terrible and infinitely fearful thing to be humbled by Him in the next. It is a very desirable favor to be abased here under the hand of His mercy, but it is a terrible chastisement to be humbled by the hand of His justice. Holy Job exclaimed: “Have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me” (Job XIX, 21). Lord, Thou hast Thy hand lifted and ready to make me feel its weight (Is. IX, 12). O Jesus, show the power of Thy mercy, make me humble by humbling me. In heaven humility exists without humiliation, and in hell perpetual humiliation without humility, but upon earth both are united, and they only are humble, who convert humiliations into humility. Humility cannot be true, if it is not “tried in the furnace of humiliation” (Eccli. II, 5).

II. POINT.

Our duty, our special office is to humble ourselves, and it belongs only to God to exalt us. If we take to

ourselves the prerogative of God; if, usurping His rights, we steal the glory which He alone should give us, if we seek to exalt ourselves, He will humble us; but if, humbling ourselves, we take the place which we deserve, He will draw us from the multitude and will distinguish us so much the more, as we have striven more earnestly to hide ourselves, according to the general rule which admits of no exception: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The one is to be feared as much as the other is to be desired. How good it is to fulfil our office, that God may accomplish His.

III. POINT.

Jesus, the great Master of humility, taught us this sublime virtue during His whole life; He gave us so many examples in the course of His holy life, that He seems to recommend it to us above all the other virtues, as the one which comprises and preserves them all, as the one most proper to Him, therefore, it is called by the apostle the virtue or power of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. XII, 9); and he proposes it to us not only as the solid foundation, but also as the continuation and the end of all Christian perfection. If, then, we are asked, what is the first step in perfection, we ought to answer with St. Augustine: It is humility. What is the second? Humility. What is the third? Humility. O Jesus, Master and perfect Model of humility, imprint this virtue in my mind by the contempt of my own judgment and of my own lights; in my heart by the love and desire for an humble and hidden life; and in my senses by modesty and an exterior demeanor, humble and respectful towards all.

Thursday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.**The publican's humility and contrition.****I. POINT.**

“The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven” (Luke NVIII, 13).

The first disposition of a penitent is humility, by which he recognizes himself as unworthy to approach God. He dares not lift up his eyes to Him, because he keeps them fixed on his sins; he displeases himself, that he may please God: he keeps aloof from the true sanctuary, of which the ancient one was only a figure; he dares not approach the holy table to eat the Bread of angels, because this bread ought not to be given to the dogs, to which the apostle St. Peter compares the sinner (2 Pet. II, 22). At the same time he strives to render himself worthy to be called; for humility is false, when it serves as a pretext to cover the insensibility, the negligence and the license of those who, not wishing to correct themselves or to give up their irregularities, excommunicate themselves and absent themselves from the holy Table. Holy Scripture condemns alike those who approach it rashly, and those who, through disgust or indifference, do not carefully prepare for the reception of the adorable Body of the Lord, without which we shall never have life (John VI, 54). The former, having entered the banquet hall of the King without the nuptial garment, are driven out and precipitated into the darkness of hell (Mat. XXII, 12); the latter, who, having been invited to the Banquet, neglected the invitation, are rejected with this terrible sentence: “I declare unto you, that none of those that were invited, shall taste of My supper” (Luke XIV, 24), that is, they shall never enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

II. POINT.

“He smote his breast.” St. Augustine says, that the publican thus punished his secret sins by these visible blows and this exterior sign of penance, to represent the contrition of his heart. It is an ancient custom of the Church, which seems to have been taken from the example of the humble publican, to strike our breast when we approach the tribunal of penance. We do this to show that we acknowledge ourselves sinners, that we condemn sin, which has its source in the heart, and that we judge it deserving of punishment. It is not enough for a penitent to humble himself before God, and to ask for a new heart; he must be angry with himself, and avenge upon himself the offence which he has committed against God, in imitation of the publican, who, becoming his own judge and accuser, struck and punished himself, that God might pardon him and become his protector. Thus we should join actions to the spirit and the interior sentiments of penance; therefore penance is called a baptism of tears, a laborious baptism (Council of Trent). O Jesus, touch my heart, and animate it efficaciously, that it may produce worthy fruits of penance.

III. POINT.

“O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” The publican, by the title of sinner, which he gives to himself with a profound sentiment of his misery, testifies how keenly he feels his great need of the infinite clemency of God in his present state, as well as for his past sins. Seeing himself weighed down by bad habits, like so many chains binding him, which he cannot break, he addresses himself to God, as to his only and sovereign Deliverer: moreover, by the lowest place which he chooses, by his posture, by his action, he acknowledges

and confesses his unworthiness before men; he blushes before God, and he manifests exteriorly his interior penance and the contrition of his heart, grieved by the remembrance of his sins: an example which should be followed by all true penitents. The publican, at the sight of his sins, is ashamed in the presence of God, and does not fear that men should witness his confusion. If repentance is in our souls, we shall say with the apostle, although in a different sense: "I am a sinner, and I will not blush to appear what I am; "I will not be ashamed of the Gospel" (Rom. I, 16), which teaches me that to obtain mercy, I must confess aloud that I have sinned against heaven and before our heavenly Father, that kind Father who merits all my love and affection.

Friday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Sentiments of penance.

I. POINT.

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

(Luke XVIII, 13.)

These few words of the publican express the most powerful motives for penance. Saying, O God, he recognizes and adores the greatness, the power and the goodness of God; he declares and professes to believe that it is the almighty God, whose greatness "hath no end" (Ps. CXLIV, 3), who is offended by sin and appeased by penance. He professes, with lively faith, that God, whom he has insulted, is the sovereign Judge of all mankind; with the royal prophet he says: "Thou art my God, my lot is in Thy hands" (Ps. XXX, 16). He confesses that it is the same God who gives life and death, who leads even to hell and delivers from its flames (1 Kings II, 6), who alone has power to send

both body and soul into everlasting fire (Mat. X, 28), or to sanctify both. In this greatness of God compared with the nothingness of the creature, what a powerful motive to humble and confound the true penitent! This motive will acquire additional weight by the consideration that God, great as He is, has taken upon Himself the expiation of our sins. O God made man, O God suffering and humbled even unto death for the sins of men! Is not this a piercing dart to wound our hearts and to penetrate them with love and sorrow?

II. POINT.

“Be merciful to me.” Before Thee, O Lord, what am I in my natural being, but an insignificant creature, a vile worm, a grain of dust carried away by the wind (Job XIII, 25), a vapor which appears for a moment, a flower which blooms and soon fades away, and to say all in one word, a pure nothing. But the world itself with all that it contains, what is it compared with God? And what am I in the midst of this universe? Less than an atom. What am I before Thee, O my God? If possible, less than nothing, since all nations are in Thy sight as if they were not (Is. XL, 17). Let all creatures disappear and myself with them, when Thou dost appear! May I humble myself, may I hide myself before Thee! Henceforth may I see nothing on earth, may I regard nothing but Thee alone.

III. POINT.

“Be merciful to me, a sinner.” The character of sinner humbles us infinitely; for what is a sinner but a horrible monster, a nothing in the order of grace, who renders himself unworthy of his being, of the use of creatures, and, above all, of the favors of the goodness of God! I am a sinner; what is there more abominable? Shall I dare to appear before God, who

is holiness and justice itself? Be favorable to me, O Lord, through Thy great mercy, which is an abyss so profound, so infinite, that it surpasses the abyss of our miseries, that is, all the sins of the world, as far as the infinite exceeds the finite; "look upon me, O Lord, and have pity on me" (Ps. XXIV, 16); regard not the sins that I have committed, but Thy image which Thou hast engraved in my soul, and which Thou didst come to repair by such great labors; regard not my unworthiness, but my necessity, for the greater my misery, the greater also my need of Thy mercy.

Saturday after the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for practising humility.

I. POINT.

"He that exalteth himself, shall be humbled."

(Luke XVIII, 14.)

Humility does not destroy true greatness; it perfects and secures it. The Wise Man says: Humble yourself in all things, in proportion to your greatness, that you may find favor with God (Eccli. III, 20). It is not he who is exalted by his birth, or his dignity, or his virtue, that God takes pleasure in humbling, but he that exalts himself, he that despises others, and who instead of referring to God what he has received from Him, glories in it, attributing it to himself, and seeking the praise which belongs only to God, and which God reserves to Himself, as He assures us: "I will not give My glory to another" (Is. XLVIII, 11). "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name" is due all honor and glory (Ps. CXIII, 1). We merit only confusion. Humility is nothing but the truth which humbles us and keeps us submissive under Thy powerful hand, O Lord; it shows us what Thou art, what

we are, what Thou dost merit and what we merit; therefore, O Sovereign Truth, Thou dost resist the proud, Thou dost love the humble and give them Thy grace (1 Pet. V, 5).

II. POINT.

“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Not all who are humbled, are humble, but only those who voluntarily abase themselves, who love humiliation, and who by the consent and the acceptance of their heart, convert it into humility. To acknowledge ourselves miserable, imperfect, sinful, is a humility of mind, which may be common to the good and to the bad; but to wish and even to love to be unknown, despised and treated as such, is true humility of heart (St. Francis de Sales); it is to love justice and to take the lowest place, as Jesus Christ desires. It is the way and the certain path to the glory which He promises to humility; they who thus humble themselves, shall be exalted, according to His words: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him become the least and the servant of all” (Mark X, 43). Because he has despised himself, the Lord will have pity on him “according to the multitude of His mercies” (Ps. L, 3).

III. POINT.

“God, whose works are perfect” (Deut. XXXII, 4), after having established humility and made it the way to glory, ceases not to exhort us to it by His promises and threats. He shows us the necessity of it, by the low and narrow door which alone leads to life. He says: “Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven” (Mat. XVIII, 3); “he that shall humble himself, as this little child, shall be the greatest. Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven” (Mat.

XIX, 14). "God hath abolished the memory of the proud, and hath preserved the memory of them that are humble in mind" (Eccli. X, 21). "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble" (Luke I, 52). "He hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the strong, that no flesh should glory in His sight" (1 Cor. I, 27, 29). What is in honor before men, is an abomination to God (Luke XVI, 15). He regards the humble, and His spirit reposes on him (Is. LXVI, 2). O my God, how many motives to make us love humility!

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

We should serve God by our hearing and our speech.

I. POINT.

"They brought to Jesus one deaf and dumb."

(Mark VII, 32.)

God has given to man exterior senses to serve the interior. The spiritual intercourse which we can have with God, is accomplished by speech and hearing. The psalmist says: "I will listen to what the Lord shall speak in me" (Ps. LXXXIV, 9); and the young Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings III, 10). The tongue is the organ of teaching, of direction and command: the hearing is the sense by which we receive instruction; it is the door of faith and the symbol of obedience. Jesus is our Teacher and our Shepherd: we are His sheep, His disciples and His servants. Therefore we ought to listen to Him when He speaks, to believe Him when He teaches us, to follow Him when He calls, to obey Him when He commands. O my God, heal the ear of my heart, that it may be always open and attentive to Thy holy will, to submit to it. Speak, and I will listen to Thee; "call,

and I will answer Thee" (Job XIII, 22). Come to me to give me Thy orders; command, and I will obey Thee.

II. POINT.

If the heart has its interior ears, by which it hears the voice of God, it has also its tongue to praise Him, to bless Him and to proclaim His glory: three things which the Church declares it is worthy and just to render to God. Nothing is more to be feared than to be deaf to His voice, and not to hear the divine language of His grace and love; but it is no less dangerous to be dumb, not to answer Him, not to acknowledge His goodness and His benefits by our co-operation and our gratitude, by our praises and our thanksgiving (Ps. L, 17). O Jesus, open my lips, and my tongue shall extol Thy praise; touch my heart, that from its abundance my mouth may speak, that it may praise Thee, that it may pray to Thee, that it may express its desires to Thee, "O my King and my God" (Ps. V, 3).

III. POINT.

Jesus, ending the course of His admirable life as a beneficent sun, did good to all, and "did all things well" (Mark VII, 37), for He delivered souls and bodies from the devils which tormented them, raised the dead to life, and restored health to the sick; to-day giving hearing and speech to the deaf and the dumb, He re-establishes man in all his relations with God and the neighbor; relations which consist principally in hearing, in guiding and following. O Jesus, correct and sanctify the hearing and the speech of my soul, that, listening to Thee, I may be instructed, consoled and strengthened, and that, speaking to Thee, and asking Thee with confidence, I may obtain from Thee, O Source of all good, that it may please Thee, by the virtue of Thy Blessed

Sacrament, to repair in me what is corrupt, to renew what is weak, and to heal what is diseased.

Monday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

The cure of the man deaf and dumb.

I. POINT.

“Jesus, looking up to heaven, groaned.”

(Mark VII, 34.)

This action of Jesus is worthy of our attention; for we find in all that He does wise rules for our instruction. What He does is not for Himself, but for us. Here we learn by His example to raise our eyes to heaven, that is, to expect our aid from heaven, without fixing our looks on earth, or putting our confidence in earthly things, and still less in ourselves, for this would be rashness, pride and presumption. “A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven” (John III, 27). “Every perfect gift”, that is, every true good, “is from above, coming down from the Father of light” (James I, 17). We must constantly raise our eyes to the Most High, and say with David: I have lifted my soul to Thee, O my God, I will not blush, because I have put my confidence in Thee (Ps. XXIV, 2); “I have lifted up mine eyes to Thee, who dwellest in heaven; as the eyes of servants are fixed on the eyes of their masters, so our eyes are fixed on Thee, until Thou hast pity on us” (Ps. CXXII, 2). Look upon us, O Lord, with a favorable eye, heal us and have mercy on us.

II. POINT.

Jesus not only uplifts His eyes, but He groans and sighs. As a charitable and compassionate physician, He takes the remedies necessary for our cure, in order to spare us their bitterness; He teaches us that the life

of a Christian is a perpetual sighing. He shows us, that to move the heart of God, we should, while addressing Him, while lifting our eyes to Him, groan and sigh at seeing ourselves so unworthy of His least favors. David says: "All my desire is before Thee" (Ps. XXXVII, 10); it tends only to Thee; I desire and regard only Thee, who art the one source of all my good; the royal prophet adds: "And my groaning is not hidden from Thee." The Holy Ghost, says St. Paul, "asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. VIII, 26). St. Augustine says, it is He, who inspires us to pray, who forms in us the sighs and groans of a heart truly humble and contrite, who makes man know his own malice and the powerful goodness of God. He who is thus moved by the Holy Ghost, hates and despises himself, loves and esteems God and puts all his hope in Him.

III. POINT.

Jesus, after having done several things to heal the deaf and dumb man, said to him: "Be thou opened." Why so many different remedies for one cure, which a simple word, a mere act of the will, a single desire could accomplish in a moment? It is to teach us how difficult it is to cure spiritual deafness. This deafness is an evil so much the more dangerous, as it is less perceived and attended to; it leads imperceptibly to hardness of heart; for who can convert such a heart, unaccustomed to listen to God, or to hear with fear, with respect, and with emotion, the word so sweet, so powerful, which formed the heavens, and by which all things were made? O Jesus, give me ears, which will enable me interiorly to hear, love and follow Thy precepts. "Say to my soul: I am thy salvation" (Ps. XXXIV, 3); but say it so loudly, that I may hear Thee and correspond to Thy goodness.

Tuesday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

“He hath done all things well.”

I. POINT.

“He charged them to tell no man, but the more He charged them, the more they published it” (Mark VII, 36).

How could the sun hide its light? Jesus, with admirable humility, wishes to conceal His miracles, not desiring to be honored on earth; but this faithful multitude, filled with astonishment at the wonders that He worked, and animated with zeal for His glory, blessed and praised Him loudly: thus the honor which flies from the proud man, and disappoints him, eluding his most ardent search, pursues the humble man and attaches itself to him against his will. O Jesus, grant that, after Thy example, I may seek and desire to live unknown, forgotten, despised on earth, and that, imitating these people, I may proclaim Thy greatness and Thy glory, saying with them unceasingly, that Thou hast done all things well.

II. POINT.

They wondered, and said: “He hath done all things well” (Mark VII, 37), that is, in Him there is nothing to reprove; His works are perfect, all are worthy of praise. Jesus is the spotless mirror of the majesty of God, and the living image of His goodness and divine perfections; He is without sin and the Holy of holies; He is just in all His ways, and holy in all His deeds. Let us learn from Him to do all things well, according to His will, according to our state and vocation. He did all things well, because all His life and conduct were a complete model of perfection, and a combination of wonders and virtues; as He Himself assures us, He sought not His own glory, but that of His Father.

O Jesus, my love, grant that I may do all things well, by imitating Thee faithfully, and doing all for Thy greater glory.

III. POINT.

In creating the world, "God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. I, 31). By the Word all things were made (John I, 3), and by His wisdom all things were directed, disposed, ordered, and received their perfection. In the work of our redemption, Jesus did all in a wise, holy and divine manner, and He could do nothing better. In the justification of our souls, and the predestination of His elect, He disposes all things with admirable equity and great goodness, making all serve for their good. His designs are unknown to us, and we are ignorant of the possible advantage of so many various accidents and events; but in the other life all will be compelled to exclaim, that God is just, that His judgments are equitable (Ps. CXVIII, 75), that He has done all things well; and even the wicked will confess it in spite of themselves. O Jesus, we now proclaim with joy, that Thou art always admirable, great and holy, not only in things high and exalted, but also in the lowest and the least.

Wednesday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

The cure of spiritual deafness and dumbness.

I. POINT.

"He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

(Mark VII, 37.)

The deaf and dumb man of the Gospel represents sinners, who, being slaves to their passions and intoxicated with love of the world, are deaf to the voice of God, and dumb to speak to Him and to implore His

mercy. David compares the sinner to the adder, which, in its fury, makes itself deaf, and stops its ears with its tail (Ps. LVII, 5), which, as St. Augustine remarks, is the last part of its body. Thus the sinner, by his love for the low and vile things of earth, to which he gives his heart and his attention, has no longer ears to hear and to listen to God; he becomes deaf and insensible to the divine inspirations of grace. But have not even those who belong to Jesus Christ, some share in this unhappy deafness? God speaks to them, reproves them, instructs them, and, without seeming to hear Him, they remain in a thousand imperfections which separate them from Him, and expose them to the danger of being lost. O Jesus, open my heart and my ears to Thy law; notwithstanding my resistance, make me hear Thy voice. O Thou, whom my soul loveth, "Thou shalt call me, and I will answer Thee" (Job XIV, 15).

II. POINT.

They who are interiorly deaf, whose spiritual deafness is infinitely more dangerous and deplorable than that of the body, are also dumb with regard to God; for we know how to speak to Him, only in proportion as we love to listen to Him, since it is His spirit which teaches us to speak to Him and pray to Him. We must, then, hear before speaking; therefore St. James exhorts us to be "quick to hear, and slow to speak" (James I, 19); and the apostles said to their Master, after having long listened to the sacred words pronounced by His lips: "Lord, teach us how to pray" (Luke XI, 1). And Jesus Himself does not disdain to teach us by His example, for He says: If I speak in the world, I say only what I have first heard and learned from My Father (John VIII, 26). O Lord, make me docile and

attentive to Thy voice, that afterwards I may merit to speak to Thee, and that Thou mayst hear me.

III. POINT.

“He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.” If Jesus could work such wonders and cures so miraculous, ought we not to have recourse to His efficacious power to obtain the cure of our souls? He must Himself put His fingers into our ears, and touch our tongue with His spittle. The prophet teaches us these two truths in an excellent manner: “I have said” within myself: “now I begin” to be converted to the Lord, and “this change” is made by the finger of God; it comes from “the right hand of the Most High” (Ps. LXXVI, 11). The saliva represents the word of God, which comes from heaven as a salutary dew. David says, moreover: “He sent His word and healed them” (Ps. CVI, 20). O Jesus, I expose my miseries and my maladies in Thy presence, “heal me, and I shall be healed, save me, and I shall be saved” (Jer. XVII, 14), for it belongs to Thee alone to give life or death, to precipitate into hell, or to deliver us.

Thursday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Meaning of the ceremonies Christ used in the cure of the man deaf and dumb.

I. POINT.

“Jesus put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, He groaned and said to him: Ephpheta, which is: Be thou opened.”
(Mark VII, 33).

Jesus wrought miracles sometimes by His word alone, often by His holy touch, sometimes with His saliva, in order thus to show in various ways His power and His divinity, and that everything in Him, or pro-

ceeding from Him, was salutary, life-giving and sanctifying. He did not disdain to employ, not only His saliva, but even His fingers which suspend the heavens, which poise "the bulk of the earth" (Is. XL, 12); His word, by which they were formed and established (Ps. XXXII, 6); even His heart, which groaned for the cure of a poor deaf and dumb man. O goodness, sufficient to win all confidence! O grace, O life, O health, always flowing and pouring forth from Jesus and His deified flesh, as from a pure and inexhaustible spring! Lord, who dost vouchsafe to feed me at the altar, make me feel this virtue which went forth from it unceasingly (Luke VI, 19), and which communicated health and grace, since Thou art always the same.

II. POINT.

Jesus had made man, forming him from the slime of the earth, and breathing into him the breath of life (Gen. II, 7); therefore He makes use of the mouth and the hands to repair him, and to show that it was He, who first created him. The fingers represent the Holy Ghost, who is called "the finger of God" (Luke XI, 20). We are, then, healed by His saliva and by His finger, because we are redeemed and saved by the Word made man, whose divine merits are applied to us by the Holy Ghost. Finally, let us add that Jesus wished to accomplish this redemption by the mouth and by the hand, that is, by the word of preaching and by His actions and sufferings, which He consummated when fastened and nailed to the Cross. O Jesus, my Creator and my Saviour, who hast drawn me from nothing, and redeemed me by Thy precious blood, heal me and have pity on me.

III. POINT.

"Looking up to heaven, He groaned." Jesus could by a single act of His will restore sight and hearing to

the afflicted man, who was brought to Him; but He wished to ask his cure with groans, to teach us humility, and to make known to us the compassion of His heart for the miseries and the frightful captivity to which sin has condemned us: for this He groaned and prayed during His whole life, as St. Paul says: "Offering prayers and supplications and tears" (Heb. V, 7) for our salvation until His last sigh. He groaned also to give us an example, and that we might learn from Him, not to work miracles, or to create a new world, but to pray, to groan, to sigh for heaven as our true country; to be penitent and humble. "Learn of Me", said He, "that I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. XI, 29), in sufferings and labors from My youth. O sighs and groans of the heart of Jesus, so worthy to be heard by the heavenly Father, be the rule and model of the groans of my heart.

Friday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Necessity of living up to one's faith.

I. POINT.

"Now I make known to you the Gospel which I have preached to you." (1 Cor. XV, 1.)

These words condemn the negligence of pastors who are not careful to instruct and nourish with the word of God the souls confided to them: they also condemn those Christians who do not observe in their manners and conduct the instructions they have received; for it is little, or even nothing at all, to receive the Gospel with apparent docility, if we do not put it in practice: it saves only those who observe it, and is, on the contrary, a sentence of condemnation and a decree of death for those who believe it without conforming their life to it. You are saved by the Gospel, says St.

Paul: that teaches us that our salvation begins and is accomplished here below, and that, consequently, marks of predestination and salvation should be conspicuous in us: it will be completed in heaven; whilst waiting for this, "our hearts and our conversation" should be only in this abode of the blessed (Phil. III, 20).

II. POINT.

"I delivered unto you which I also received: How Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried and rose again the third day" (1 Cor. XV, 3). If a Christian is questioned concerning his belief, will he not answer boldly, that he believes and confesses all these things, as incontestable truths? But if we consult his conduct, if we examine what it is to believe truly, and to know Jesus Christ crucified, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that there are comparatively few who believe as they ought, and are truly faithful. There are few who, according to the desire of St. Paul, have the same sentiments as Jesus Christ (Phil. II, 2), who like to be afflicted, humbled; who are obedient as He was, even unto death; thus, according to the same apostle, in the multitude of those who revere the Cross there are many who are enemies of the Cross, and "whose end is perdition" (Phil. III, 19). O Jesus, render my sentiments conformable to my faith; may I suffer and die willingly, that I may reign with Thee!

III. POINT.

"I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (1 Cor. XV, 9). Let us learn from St. Paul, that the proof of our faith is to have a lively gratitude to Him in whom we believe. The great apostle preaches a God humbled even to the opprobrium of the Cross, and, entering into his sentiments, he abases and

humbles himself, calling himself "one born out of due time", he publicly confesses his past faults; thus he teaches us how greatly our sins should humble us, even though we should be as sure as he was, that they have been forgiven, and though we had practised a penance as long and as rigorous as his; though we should have labored as he did, more than all the others, and could say with as much truth: "Grace in me hath not been void" (1 Cor. XV, 10). But, O my Lord, if I have done anything good, it is not I, but Thy grace in me. And how often I have rendered it vain and useless! A thought which should humble me, confound me, and make me re-enter into my nothingness.

Saturday after the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Silence and retirement.

I. POINT.

"He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

(Mark VII, 37.)

Silence is a praiseworthy virtue; it is the guardian of humility and charity. Jesus Christ spent thirty years in silence, and the saints, after His example, have esteemed and practised it. We know how to speak to God so much the better, as we are more silent with men. I have never conversed with them, said an ancient writer, without becoming less a man: yet there is a time to speak, as well as a time to be silent, according to the Wise Man; there is a silence which is evil and pernicious. If we sin frequently with our tongue, there is also a dumb devil who makes us sin sometimes by silence; he closes our mouth when there is question of getting rid of sin by an humble confession; but the Holy Ghost discovers to us his stratagems by saying: Follow not the error of the wicked, confess your sins

while you have health and life, and before you are surprised by death (Eccli. XVII, 26). Blush not to accuse yourself of your sins, nor to tell the truth for the salvation of your soul; for there is a salutary confusion which obtains grace and glory (Eccli. IV, 24). "He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper, but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy" (Prov. XXVIII, 13). O my God, why should I blush to acknowledge myself guilty, since I have not blushed to become guilty.

II. POINT.

The first mark which Jesus gives, by which to know His sheep, is that they hear His voice: "My sheep hear My voice, and follow Me; you hear Me not, because you are not of My sheep" (John X, 27). O unhappy deafness, which excludes us from the flock of Jesus Christ! What is more dreadful and more terrible! No one will realize it perfectly until the great day, when the sheep, by the order of the just Judge, shall be forever separated from the goats, and the latter shall be cast, by an awful but just judgment, into the eternal flames, while the blessed flock of the docile and faithful sheep, who have listened to the Shepherd, shall hear from His lips these sweet and consoling words: "Come, ye blessed of My Father", follow Me into My glory, to "possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat. XXV, 34).

III. POINT.

"Jesus took him from the multitude apart" (Mark VII, 33). The first and most efficacious means to heal our souls, is retirement, or retreat. We should separate ourselves from the multitude, at least in spirit, to be able to speak to God and to listen to Him: neither can be done amid the confusion of creatures; therefore,

God said by His prophet: "I will lead her into solitude, and there I will speak to her heart" (Osee II, 14). The noise of the world makes us deaf, the illusion and enchantment of its vain amusements prevent us from hearing the voice of God, which calls us to true goods; Jesus Christ must snatch us away from these dangerous entanglements to lead us into the desert, into those fertile solitudes, where the torrents of His graces flow in abundance; there the ears of the deaf will be opened, there the tongue of the dumb will be loosed. "Who will give me the wings of a dove", that I may fly there with him who said: I have gone far away, to fly into the desert, where I will wait for Him who is my salvation (Ps. LIV, 7).

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ's abasement in dwelling among men.

I. POINT.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see."
(*Luke X, 23.*)

It is a great abasement for God, and an abasement proceeding from His love, to have chosen to render Himself visible. The prophet expresses it in these terms: "He was seen on earth, and conversed among men" (Bar. III, 38). He who dwelt in light inaccessible (1 Tim. VI, 16), and of whom it is written: "No man shall see God and live" (Exod. XXXIII, 20); He who is called the Invisible, appeared visibly here below, to be seen by man, to be his guide, and a visible model of every virtue; He concealed under the veil of our humanity the splendor of His majesty, lest our weak eyes should be dazzled, that we might look upon Him, whom the angels desire to contemplate unceasingly. O Jesus, the Model proposed to us for our imitation!

Blessed are they who had the happiness of seeing Thee, and still more blessed they who behold Thee unceasingly with the eyes of faith, to follow Thy holy examples and to conform their lives to Thine!

II. POINT.

“Many kings and prophets have desired to see” Him, and have not seen Him (Luke X, 24). Abraham had desired this happiness, when he rejoiced to see the day of Jesus Christ (John VIII, 56) in spirit and by an anticipated hope. The holy and patient Job aspired to it: “I shall see my God in my flesh, and mine eyes shall behold Him; this hope is laid up in my bosom” (Job XIX, 27). Such were the desires of David, when, thirsting for God and inflamed with thirst for Him, he uttered these burning words: “As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God” (Ps. XLI, 2). This was the desire of the just Simeon, whom the Holy Ghost had filled with the hope, “that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord”; when he had the happiness to see Him, and hold Him in his arms, saying: “Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen” Him whom Thou dost send to be our salvation (Luke II, 29). O Jesus, since I enjoy the wonderful happiness of seeing Thee with the eyes of faith in Thy ineffable Sacrament, grant that I may desire nothing more on earth; be Thou the only object of my search, of my longing and my love.

III. POINT.

Jesus wished not only to be seen by men, but also to converse with them. What a profound abasement of the uncreated Wisdom, to render Himself familiar, to entertain Himself, to speak with, to sit at the same

table with men, rough, coarse, ignorant and imperfect as the apostles were; to have them always with Him as companions of His life and labors, even to find Himself often with publicans and sinners! O inconceivable humility of a God, which teaches us not to disdain any one, not to despise the lowest and the most unworthy. O goodness equal to His humility, and which He preserves in His glory! For, being triumphant in the heavens, He nevertheless dwells in the midst of us, on our altars, still to be our true "Emmanuel, God with us" (Is. VII, 14). Ought we not to exclaim in an excess of astonishment: Is it conceivable that God should thus dwell with men upon earth? And if the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, how much less houses built by the hand of man? Who am I, Lord, to prepare an abode worthy of Thee?

Monday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for loving God.

I. POINT.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Luke X, 27.)

All our happiness in this transitory life, and in the eternal life which follows it, consists in loving God and in being loved by God. We are very certain that He loves us, but we are not certain that we really love Him. That God should love His creatures, He the infinite Sovereign, who has no need of them or their services, that He should love them although so unworthy of His love, is admirable, and merits our astonishment; but that the creature, who, besides his unworthiness, is so poor and indigent, should not love his God, the treasure and source of all good, from whom alone he can expect and receive it, is strange, deplorable, and, at the same time, inconceivable. O my God, where is the heart so

hard, so rebellious, so ungrateful, so senseless, as not to love Thee above all, when it knows that it is loved by Thee.

II. POINT.

Everything in the world proclaims to us loudly the love of God. Heaven, earth, the elements, and the rest of the creatures made for our use, are so many powerful voices, which exhort us to love so great a benefactor; they invite us by their example, loving God in their own manner, turning to Him and obeying Him, without ever violating or transgressing the laws which He has prescribed. But how can man, for whom God has created all things, refrain from loving Him? (Ps. CXLVIII, 5). How can man, to whom God has given a soul, capable of knowing His infinite perfections, on which He has imprinted His image and likeness (Wis. II, 23), to which He has communicated a capacity so vast, that it cannot be filled or satisfied except by Him alone, how can man refrain from loving Him? O Lord, my heart is made for Thee, it will never find repose until it rests in Thee (St. Augustine). Permit it not to go astray by seeking, by loving anything outside of Thee.

III. POINT.

If the love of God for us urges us to love Him in return, if His innumerable benefits engage us to do so, and this powerfully and indispensably, there is still another motive for loving Him, and this is the commandment which He has given us in terms so strong, that He threatens us, not with the loss of some temporal good, or with a passing punishment, but with eternal pains, if we refuse to love Him; and, as if it were not a sufficient honor, a sufficient blessing to love Him, He promises us everlasting delights, treasures and crowns

if we love Him. After promises so magnificent, can we help being inflamed with His love? How can we live without loving Him? Who will ever cease to love Him in life and in death? And, if life were an obstacle to our love, who would not desire with St. Paul, to be delivered from his body, that he might attain the perfection of this love?

Tuesday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

How we should love God.

I. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.”

(Luke X, 27.)

The heart is the abode of the affections and the faculty of loving. To love God with all our heart, is to love Him without division; it is to reserve for Him alone all our love, and all our affection; it is to love Him more than all things, and above all things; it is to sacrifice all to His love; it is to love nothing outside of Him, except by His order and for love of Him (St. Augustine). For he does not love Thee enough, O Lord, who loves anything outside of Thee, and who does not love it for Thy sake. It is to love Him even to contempt, even to forgetfulness of ourselves, when there is question of weighing His interests with ours; even to hatred of ourselves, when we find ourselves in opposition to Him. O Jesus, purify my heart from all strange love, from all self-love, that it may be worthy to love Thee, and to be loved by Thee; for Thou dost love them that love Thee, and Thou lettest Thyself be found by those who seek Thee (Prov. VIII, 17).

II. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul” (Luke X, 27). The soul in her faculties and her

powers, that is, the understanding, the memory and the will, bearing the image and the stamp of the Divinity, should employ them all and make them serve for His love. The understanding should be consecrated and entirely occupied in knowing and contemplating His divine perfections. By contemplating them we learn to love Him. "Be still and see that I am God" (Ps. XLV, 11). The memory should preserve lovingly and faithfully the remembrance of His benefits; it is not possible to consider them without being penetrated with gratitude and love. Never forget the goodness of the Lord, and all the graces that He has bestowed on thee (Ps. CII, 2). Finally, the will, instructed and warmed by the two other faculties, should turn to God, should desire and wish for his love with all its power; it should do and embrace all that love wishes, all that can preserve and increase love, all that is pleasing to this love; and this is what St. John calls to "love in deed and in truth" (1 John III, 18).

III. POINT.

"Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy mind." If the senses and the corporal faculties of man should serve God and be subject to His love, how much more should the spiritual man serve Him! The body serves God when its actions are referred to His glory. The action of the mind is thought and reasoning. Let us love God with a love of esteem, considering that He alone is worthy of all our love; that He alone is the worthy object of our most profound meditations. Every other object is unworthy to occupy a mind created to think on this supreme Object, to represent to itself the divine greatness and perfections. What sweeter pleasure than to think on what we love! This gives true consolation, delight and joy amid the trials of this life.

O Divine Object, captivate and occupy all my thoughts, Of what should I think, Lord, when I do not think of Thee; of Thee, who dost always think of me, and who dost assure me that, though a mother should forget her child, Thou canst never forget me (Is. XLIX, 15).

Wednesday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

The traveller to Jericho, falling among robbers, a figure of the sinner.

I. POINT.

“A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.”

(Luke X, 30.)

This man is the figure of the sinner, who like Adam, the first of sinners, withdrawing from God and growing cold in His love, falls under the power of the devils; they become his masters, strip him of virtue, take from him the robe of innocence, and finally leave him covered with wounds and half dead. The first source of his misfortune is that he leaves Jerusalem, that is, he loses sight of that blessed country, the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal kingdom which God shows him and promises to him; he leaves God Himself, he thinks only of Jericho, he sighs only for the world, he knows and enjoys no pleasures but those which the world offers him. O how dangerous it is to withdraw from God! O Lord, all those who stray from Thee shall be confounded: they shall perish without resource (Ps. LXXII, 27). Sustain me with Thy hand, O my God, and never abandon me.

II. POINT.

After the sinner has separated himself from God, and, by an abominable apostasy, has even usurped His place; when he has listened to the hissing of the serpent and his deceitful promise: “You shall be as gods” (Gen. III, 5); when he thinks only of exalting and

pleasing himself, can he expect anything but a fall and a fatal death? He has descended from that honorable rank in which God had established him by his union with Himself; he has not understood his true greatness, he has not preserved it; he has given up the claims which he had to heaven, in order to descend and to abase himself to the earth; can we wonder if he afterwards falls into the hands of robbers, if he is stripped, beaten and covered with wounds! He would not have fallen, if he had not descended, by seeking a low and vain pleasure in preference to God. Cease, says the Wise Man, cease to seek death with so much ardor in the wanderings of your life; employ not the labors of your hands to acquire that which will destroy you (Wis. I, 12). O God, how necessary it is for me to attach myself to Thee! My ruin comes from me, my salvation is in Thee alone. "Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me" (Osee XIII, 9).

III. POINT.

As the just man attains the perfection of justice only by degrees, so the sinner does not fall suddenly into the abyss of the greatest crimes; at first, he even abhors them; but he falls into them gradually, he approaches them almost insensibly, as the traveller in the Gospel, who step by step, and tranquilly, without dreaming of the danger which threatens him, descends from Jerusalem to Jericho. Without remorse we lose our first fervor and the virtuous habits which we had contracted; hence we easily fall into the ordinary imperfections of a slothful life; venial sins become familiar, we fear only mortal sins; the health of the soul is affected and weakens day by day; the sinner deprives himself of the assistance of the divine protection; and thus weak, disarmed, without support, always descend-

ing, advancing towards the precipice, can he promise himself that he will not perish? The soul has an understanding with her enemies, she allows herself to be stripped and wounded, because she loves what is evil, and takes pleasure in sin. The Holy Ghost makes her say: "They have smitten me cruelly, and I did not perceive it." O Lord, may we not experience the truth of these maxims: "He that neglecteth small things, shall fall little by little" (Eccli. XIX, 1). "He that is unfaithful in that which is least, shall be unfaithful also in that which is greater" (Luke XVI, 10).

Thursday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

It is a blessed thing to see Jesus.

I. POINT.

"Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see."

(Luke X, 23.)

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

(John XX, 29.)

Jesus, by these last words, refers to those who are born in the time of the Evangelical Law, that is, those who, because He has left the earth and returned to heaven, have not had the happiness of seeing Him in His mortal flesh, but who nevertheless believe in Him, and receiving here below the reward of their faith, and enjoying His graces, are sanctified and enriched by His merits. May all creatures bless Thee, O Jesus, because through Thy goodness I have been born at a time, in a place in which I can know Thee, love and serve Thee, and share in Thy benefits; but may I not be like those who, having had the advantage of seeing Thee, did not receive Thee! Thou wast in the world, and the world knew Thee not; Thou didst shine in the darkness, O divine and eternal Light, and the darkness com-

prehended Thee not (John I, 5); a strange blindness, a monstrous ingratitude which we ought to fear and lament above all things.

II. POINT.

“Blessed are they that see the things that you see.” If the happiness proper to those who saw Jesus on earth, is proper also to faithful Christians, how much more is it not so to the souls consecrated to God? If the queen of Saba, seeing the wisdom of Solomon, said to him, as if beside herself: “Blessed are thy servants who stand always before thee, and who hear thy wisdom” (3 Kings X, 8), what will they say whom the apostle calls “the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God”? (1 Cor. IV, 1). What will those pure souls say, who have no care but to please Him, and to be holy in body and mind? Ought we not to exclaim: Blessed, O Lord, are they who stand daily in Thy presence (2 Par. IX, 7), who approach Thy sacred altars, who by their word cause Thee to be present thereon, and who receive Thee into their hearts! Blessed are they who adore Thee in this august Sacrament, who touch Thee, and who are nourished with Thy sacred Flesh, who assemble seven times a day in Thy temple, there to praise and celebrate Thy greatness.

III. POINT.

If they are happy who, in the exile of this mortal life, see Jesus as through a glass, in obscure clouds, veiled under the species of the Sacrament, what must we think of those who behold Him face to face in heaven, who live by Him and in Him, who contemplate His beauty and His infinite perfections, who have entered into His delights, and who enjoy eternal glory, without fear of ever losing it? “Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see” (Luke X, 23), O glor-

ious saints! A thousand times blessed are they who see with the eyes of the soul Jesus in His divinity, and who will see Him with the eyes of the body, after the resurrection, in His most holy humanity. O my God, I shall not be fully satisfied, till Thy glory shall appear (Ps. XVI, 15).

Friday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ, the good Samaritan.

I. POINT.

“A Samaritan who was passing by, approached him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.”
(Luke X, 34.)

The holy Fathers have found in the Samaritan a figure of the excessive charity of Jesus Christ towards men. He became a pilgrim, that, going about the earth, He might do good to all (Acts X, 38), and might spread everywhere, like a divine sun, the favorable influences of His graces. He allowed Himself to be moved with pity for our miseries; He did not disdain to approach us, to humble His greatness to our lowliness, to dress and heal our wounds. He pours in oil, when by the consideration of His goodness, He awakens in our wounded souls the hope of pardon; He mingles wine, when He astonishes us by the sight of His severe justice and the terror of His awful judgment: after having thus joined strength to meekness, zeal to tenderness, He binds up our wounds, that is, He checks sin and moderates the impetuosity of our passions. He says: “I will seek that which was lost: . . . I will bind up that which was broken, I will strengthen that which was weak, I will preserve that which was fat and strong” (Ez. XXXIV, 16).

II. POINT.

“He set him on his own beast” (Luke X, 34). This circumstance represents admirably, how far Jesus Christ carried His compassion and charity for us. As the animals, which, by the order of God, were formerly sacrificed to Him, were a representation, although gross and infinitely inferior, of the pure and holy Victim which they prefigured, that is, of the immaculate Flesh of the Divine Lamb, who was to immolate Himself to God on the Cross: so the beast on which the Samaritan places the sick man, represents to us, according to the Fathers, Jesus Christ, who chose to load Himself with the burden of our sins, to take upon His own flesh the penalty that was due to us, and “bear all our infirmities”, according to the expression of the prophet (Is. LIII, 4). O my Saviour, is it not just that I should share Thy burden and join my penance to Thine, since I am guilty and sinful? Is it not just that, after Thy example, I should relieve my neighbor and bear up with him, for love of Thee?

III. POINT.

The Samaritan, not satisfied with having dressed the man's wounds, taken him to an inn, and paid for him, that nothing might be spared that could be useful for his cure, set no bounds to his liberality, and even promised to pay all that would be necessary over and above the sum already given (Luke X, 35). O charity too great and too disinterested, not to be an image of that of Jesus Christ, who, after having paid our debts on the Cross, after having redeemed us with a “plentiful redemption” (Ps. CXXIX, 7), places Himself in our hands at the altar, gives us, moreover, the merits of His precious Blood in the sacrament of penance, in a word, communicates to us all His treasures, that each day we

may find in Him remedies suitable for the salvation of our souls; and that by Him we may pay the new debts which we unhappily contract every day by our infidelities, which should grieve us so much the more, as we find in Him greater goodness and readiness to pardon them.

Saturday after the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for loving God.

I. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Luke X, 27).

O commandment incomparable in its sweetness! If God ordered us simply to fear Him, to dread Him, to respect Him, to obey Him, what more just and equitable? But He orders us to love Him, what more surprising and admirable? Who am I, Lord, that Thou dost command me to love Thee? Thou art God, and this title alone demands all my love. We ought to love God on account of Himself, because He is infinitely lovable, and for His adorable perfections He merits to be supremely and singularly loved. God, as God, ought to be loved with a love of complacency; for we ought to rejoice at what He is in Himself, and to take pleasure in His greatness. O my God, I give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, and because Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only art the Most High; “my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke I, 46).

II. POINT.

If we ought to love God on account of Himself, what a powerful motive to love Him we have also, when we consider what He is to us. We hold from Him our being, our life and the faculty of loving, and He gives them to us only for this purpose. He attracts us by

constant benefits; how can we remain insensible? All the goods of nature are gifts of His liberality; all the goods of grace are so many effects, or, to speak more correctly, so many efforts of His excessive charity; for what has He not done and suffered, to merit them for us? O God, who hast loved me more than Thyself, since Thou hast chosen to die for me, what a love of preference I should have for Thee! Why have I not a thousand lives to sacrifice them for Thy glory, in return for Thy love for me?

III. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord.” God commands us to love Him, not that He has need of our love, but because we ourselves need to love Him, and all our happiness is attached to this love; for we cannot cease to love God without beginning to lose ourselves (St. Francis de Sales). If He wishes us to love Him, it is not for His own interest, but for ours; our love is useless to Him, and it is pleasing to Him only because it is just and profitable to us. We need to receive of His abundance, to supply for our poverty; His inclination to give and to bestow graces calls and excites our indigence to have recourse to Him, that we may be enriched by His liberality; and what more favorable meeting, what more desirable union than that of the inexhaustible and sovereign Good, which seeks only to communicate itself and to pour itself forth in favor of our misery, as extreme as it is helpless.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The leprosy of sin.

I. POINT.

“*There met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off.*” (Luke XVII, 12.)

These ten lepers represent all men infected with the

leprosy of sin; they remain at a distance and dare not approach, because under the law of Moses lepers were separated from the rest of the people (Lev. XIII, 46); thus sinners, covered with a leprosy more shameful, more horrible and more dangerous, should be driven forth and banished from the society of men, lest they communicate the contagion of their pernicious examples and evil conversation, for it is thus that they corrupt good morals (1 Cor. XV, 33). For this reason St. Augustine says: Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are. Thus David protests that he has no part in the assemblies of the wicked (Ps. XXV, 5), that he hates them with a perfect hatred (Ps. CXVIII, 113). In fact, how can we find pleasure with the enemies of God, with men separated from Him, from His grace, from His love, from a participation in the merits of Jesus, from the communion of the saints? O sin, abominable leprosy, which draws down upon us the hatred of God and the execration of men!

II. POINT.

What a guilty and damnable obstinacy is that of the sinner separated from God, when he willingly remains far from Him by persisting in sin! But when the sinner withdraws and remains aloof, because he is spiritually diseased and ashamed of his evil doing, he has a sure means of obtaining pardon. The more he acknowledges himself unworthy, not only to approach God, but, like the publican, to look up to heaven, and even to be regarded by God, the more he humbles himself before Him and trembles because of His awful judgments: the more, O sovereign Lord, who from the height of Thy greatness dost look favorably upon the most abject things, and dost disdain the most exalted, the more Thou dost approach him, the more Thou dost

show him the heart of a Father and "the bowels of compassion and goodness". Come then, Lord, to meet my soul; bow Thy heavens and come down, bend Thyself towards me; may the abyss of my extreme misery attract the abyss of Thy great mercy!

III. POINT.

The sinner meets Jesus when his heart is touched and his will is changed, when he turns from vanity to truth, from darkness to light, from the love of creatures and of himself to the pure love of the Creator; for the work of our justification depends on the meeting or union of the grace of God with our co-operation. Christ says: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him" (Mat. XXV, 6). He calls us, He gives us the power, we must give Him the will; and in giving it to Him, we still give Him His own gifts, since this good will, by which we co-operate, has been inspired and merited by Him. O incomparable favor, that Thou shouldst come this day to meet my soul in Thy Blessed Sacrament! Make me go to meet Thee by the ardor of my desires and the fervor of my affections; may my heart be united to Thine, my will to Thy will, may my will be submissive in all things to Thy just and holy commands! What union can be more happy, what meeting more advantageous!

Monday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The prayer of the lepers and its lessons.

I. POINT.

"They lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." (Luke XVII, 13.)

These redoubled cries show the ardor and earnestness of their desires. Thus the sinner, seeing himself plunged in the abyss of his misery, abandoned to temp-

tations, without assistance, should utter piercing cries, that is, he should pray with fervor and perseverance, that he may be favorably heard by God, from whom his iniquities have separated him and banished him to an infinite distance. For this reason the penitent king said: "I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I cried unto Thee, save me" (Ps. CXVIII, 145). And again: From the depth of my miseries I have uttered my cries to Thee, O Lord, deign to hear my voice. "Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord! Lord hear my voice" (Ps. CXXIX, 1). "I have labored with crying; my jaws are become hoarse (Ps. LXVIII, 4); "I have cried in the day and in the night before Thee" (Ps. LXXXVII, 2). O fervor and perseverance in prayer, which ravishes the heart of God, which causes the weapons of justice to fall from His hands, and moves Him to show mercy to the penitent, even when He is most irritated against him.

II. POINT.

"They lifted up their voice." The ten lepers lift up one and the same voice; they unite to make the same supplication, because their need is the same, and thus joining their voices and their prayers, they hope to do a gentle violence to the goodness of our Lord, and to obtain their cure more surely. We should learn from their example the efficacy of prayer made in common, as that of the disciples assembled in the Supper-room. When they had prayed, says the Sacred Text, they were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts IV, 31). And why were the doors of the prison, in which St. Peter was confined, miraculously opened? Because the faithful united together in praying without interruption for his deliverance. Therefore it is a holy and profitable thing to praise God and to pray to Him in common, with one

heart and one soul. Thus the seraphim cry unceasingly: Holy, Holy, Holy; and the twenty-four Elders, that is, the saints in heaven, repeat together: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive honor, glory and power" (Apoc. IV, 8). O admirable union and charity of the Church, which renders spiritual goods common among her children. She causes them to pray together, that their prayer may become more efficacious to move the heart of God.

III. POINT.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." This prayer is full of respect and confidence; it specifies nothing in particular, it asks only for the mercy of Jesus, leaving the rest to His disposal. The lepers call Him Saviour and Master, because, as we have received two principal wounds in our nature, blindness and ignorance in the understanding, malice and sin in the will, Jesus Christ, as Master, teaches us, dissipates our darkness, enlightens our mind; and, as Saviour, He changes and reforms our corrupt will, effaces our sins and procures our salvation. O Jesus, the only Teacher and Saviour of our souls, fill our minds with Thy divine light and our hearts with Thy grace and Thy holy love; but, above all things, have mercy on us: Thy mercy will provide abundantly for our needs, and that is sufficient.

Tuesday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Gratitude to God.

I. POINT.

"One of the lepers, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, glorifying God with a loud voice."
(Luke XVII, 15.)

The ten lepers manifested their humility by not daring to approach Jesus; their faith by praying to

Him with earnestness; their obedience by setting out at His word to show themselves to the priests; but all having been cleansed, only one returned to thank his physician and express his gratitude. And he alone merited to receive the cure of his spiritual leprosy, and to hear these words from the mouth of his Saviour: "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke XVII, 19). The faith of all the ten obtained the cure of their corporal leprosy; but this one, making his faith a living faith by his gratitude and love, and active by good works, was the only one who was spiritually healed; the nine others perished miserably, as St. Bernard remarks, for the Saviour asks where they are, only because salvation is far from sinners.

II. POINT.

"Were not ten made clean? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger." Among men scarcely one in ten is found, who acknowledges the goodness of God, who is sensible of His benefits, who gives Him thanks for His favors. Jesus complains of it, and His servants are afflicted by it. What, says the prophet, "the just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart" (Is. LVII, 1). St. Francis, having retired apart, wept bitterly, heaving deep sighs; and being questioned, he answered: "Alas! my Saviour Jesus suffered so much for us, He died for us and no one thinks of it! And he began again to weep. O guilty forgetfulness, which should be wept over with tears of blood! But if we add to this indifference the still blacker and more criminal ingratitude of those who, taking advantage of the gifts of God, use them to offend Him, will not our hearts be rent within us? The rich of the world become proud, the powerful oppress their neighbor, the learned allow themselves to be puffed up

by their knowledge, and often the more grace and virtue we have received, the more vain and proud we become, as if these different gifts were not from God alone. A detestable ingratitude, deserving eternal punishment!

III. POINT.

“Thy faith hath made thee whole.” The thanksgiving of the leper, received by Jesus with so much goodness, teaches us that nothing is so agreeable to God, or more justly due to Him from creatures, than gratitude for His benefits. We can repay them only in this manner, and He wishes no other exchange, no other compensation. The principal homage that is due to Him, is our gratitude. Never does a soul honor Him more perfectly, says St. Augustine, than when she attributes none of His gifts to herself, but humbly confesses her unworthiness, praises the liberality of her Benefactor, and renders Him homage for His benefits by her grateful love. Moreover, what more efficacious means to preserve the graces received from Him, and to obtain new ones, than never to lose the remembrance of them? “O my soul, bless the Lord, and let all that is within me bless His holy Name” (Ps. CII, 1). Never forget His benefits, He forgives all thy iniquities and heals all thy infirmities; He crowns Thee by the multitude of His mercies.

Wednesday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ sends us to the priests to be cleansed from sin.

I POINT.

“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”
(*Luke XVII, 14*).

The priests of the New Law have an incomparable excellence and advantage over those of the Synagogue. To the latter it belonged to discern the character of the

leprosy and to judge of its cure; but the priests of the Law of grace have the power, not only to know the leprosy, but to heal it; not, however, the leprosy of the body, but that of the soul—which is sin. Therefore Jesus, the great Highpriest, the Author of both Laws, healed the ten lepers corporally, but spiritually only that one who acknowledged his Deliverer. This leper, full of gratitude, receives a two-fold health, being justified and sanctified in his soul, after having been purified in his body. O power of Jesus, which He has left to His ministers, to bind and to loose souls, to pardon and remit sins, to close and to open heaven! Authority of the priests, which should inspire us with respect for them! Goodness, infinite clemency of Jesus, to have imparted in our favor such power to men!

II. POINT.

“Go, show yourselves to the priests; as they went, they were made clean.” Jesus instituted the sacrament of penance: when we are attacked by the leprosy of sin, He wishes us to have recourse to it to be purified. Therefore He sends us to the priests, who are the depositories and ministers of that sacrament. But what is its virtue and efficacy? Sometimes, when we are only on the way, we find ourselves entirely cured. It is perfect contrition which produces this wonder. As soon as a sinner, penetrated with lively sorrow for having offended God, whom he loves for Himself and above all things, determines to make to the priest an humble and sincere confession of his sin, it is forgiven. If he should find it absolutely impossible to make the confession which he had resolved upon, if he should die before being able to execute his resolution, he would, nevertheless, be restored to favor with the Sovereign Master. His contrition, excited by the perfect love of God reign-

ing in his heart, and joined to his desire to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, fully justifies him in the eyes of God. O goodness, which never commands anything impossible, which accepts the disposition of a sincere heart, and which renders the yoke of God light and easy (Mat. XI, 30) by the unction of His grace and love.

III. POINT.

“Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them” (John XX, 23). Jesus Christ sends us to His ministers, as formerly He sent the lepers to the priests, and St. Paul to Ananias. His object was to show that, although He is Himself the Sovereign Priest, who alone by His secret graces moves hearts and restores souls to life, He wishes, nevertheless, to exercise His power by the ministry of those to whom He has given it: so that the priest, not only declares that sins are forgiven, as some heretics maintained, but he truly remits them, according to the express words of Jesus Christ, and the explanation given by the holy Fathers, who so exalt this power that they assure us, that all the penances and good works which it prescribes, derive from it their efficacy, their merit and virtue. Therefore the sinner ought not to choose these penances, but rather to receive them, as a sick man who takes the remedies ordered by his physician, and who desires no others.

Thursday after the Thirtieth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should imitate Abraham.

I. POINT.

“God made promises to Abraham and to his seed.”

(Gal. III, 16.)

St. Paul adds that this seed or posterity is Jesus Christ; but had Jesus Christ need of promises, He who

was Himself promised as the Saviour and the only resource of fallen man? No; but Jesus Christ is the head of a body, of which we are the members (Ephes. I, 22); thus Christians who have the happiness of having Christ for their head, and who imitate the faith of Abraham, and of the race of the seed of Abraham, to whom the promises were made. Jesus said to the Jews: "If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham" (John VIII, 39). Our actions declare what we are; we show that we are the children of God, when we imitate God; we are the children of the devil, when we act like the devil, according to the reproach which Jesus made to the Jews: "You do the works of your father" (John VIII, 41); you are the children of the devil, and you accomplish the desires of your father. They who have the faith of Abraham, are truly the children of the Lord, because like Him they regard, not temporal goods, but eternal goods, making these the object of their desires and the end of their ambition.

II. POINT.

"Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred" (Gen. XII, 1). These words were spoken to Abraham, and are addressed to all Christians, who, being his children according to faith, practise his works, obey the voice of heaven, and in this sense are called by St. Paul "the Israel of God" (Gal. VI, 16). United to Jesus Christ as to their head, they form but one body with Him. God has called them like the ancient patriarch, and has distinguished them from numberless others buried in the darkness of error, to make them pass into "His admirable light" (1 Pet. II, 9). He wishes them to separate themselves from the multitude and from the tumult of the world, to detach themselves from flesh and blood in order to follow Him. This in-

duced St. John to say: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 John II, 15); and St. Paul says that we should use the things of this world as if we used them not (1 Cor. VII, 31). What do these words mean: "Go forth out of thy country"? They do not always signify that we should leave, as Abraham did, our country and our father's house, but that we should leave ourselves, separate ourselves from natural affections, from low and earthly thoughts, from worldly pleasures; that we should change, if not our place of abode or our station in life, at least our love and our conduct, so that we ourselves may be converted and changed.

III. POINT.

"Fear not, Abraham, I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. XV, 1). Let him who, touched by grace, wishes to leave the world, or to cease to conform to its corrupt customs, not be intimidated by its threats, its reproaches, its mockery; let him fear nothing. If he imitates the faith and obedience of Abraham, he will have a share in the great reward which was promised to him, and God will become his protector. David says: "The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. XXVI, 1). St. Augustine says, a king does not fear in the midst of his guards, a man believes himself in security when he is escorted by men, mortal like himself, and should we fear, being in the arms of God, should we tremble, having for our safeguard the immortal and almighty King? O my God, "though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me" (Ps. XXII, 4). But Thou art with me, not only by Thy grace, but also by the virtue of Thy Sacrament:

the august Sacrament, in which, giving Thyself really, Thou dost give me in anticipation the promised great reward, which is Thyself.

Friday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Dispositions for confession.

I. POINT.

"Go show yourselves to the priests."

(Luke XVII, 14.)

We find in these words the dispositions necessary for a good confession. First, it should be humble. He who has not blushed to sin, ought to blush profitably in acknowledging himself guilty. Humble your soul in the presence of the priest, says the Wise Man (Eccli. IV, 7); the sinner, covered with shame and confusion, should regard himself at his feet, as a criminal before his judge. To obtain pardon for his sins, and to become just, he must accuse himself sincerely, take part against himself, acknowledging himself to be deserving of eternal confusion and the contempt of all the creatures, which he has abused in unworthily offending their Creator. He should consider it as just to be recognized, reputed and treated as a criminal; he should love to have justice done to him, in the scorn and contempt of others, in order to expiate the pride and injustice which have led him to despise the law of his God. Thus humiliation of heart, which is a victim worthy of the eyes of God, is the first part of true penance.

II. POINT.

"Show yourselves to the priests." Let us learn from this expression of our Saviour, with what uprightness and frankness we should open our heart, and manifest it as it really is to him who here below holds His place and exercises His power. As he is to heal our

diseases and to apply the remedies, he must probe the wound to know its depth and its ordinary source, that is, pride, which instils its venom everywhere. Let us labor to destroy our pride by the humiliation of a sincere and frank accusation of all that in us is bad, low and corrupt. What clemency in God, to change the eternal punishment and opprobrium which we have merited, into a humiliation and punishment so light, to which He attaches our pardon and the grace of a prompt and perfect reconciliation. "For, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all our iniquity" (1 John I, 9). He effaces our sins for love of Himself, and He will remember them no more" (Is. XLIII, 25).

III. POINT.

The spirit of humility and sincerity which we ought to bring to the tribunal of penance, will have nothing hard and difficult for us, if our heart is truly penetrated with contrition and regret for our offences. If hatred of sin is truly established in us, hatred of ourselves, for having so basely committed it, will soon follow; and we shall find everything just, sweet and easy, which can expiate it, appease God and avenge Him for our injustice. Contrition is a sovereign sorrow for having offended God, founded upon love of Him; and when it is such, the greatest trials become pleasing, because they serve to destroy the only and sovereign evil, which is sin; so that the soul would choose to suffer all evils together, rather than relapse into so great a misfortune. O Jesus, implant these sentiments in my heart; I desire them, and I am sorry for not having sufficiently deplored my outrages against Thee. Regard my desire and supply what is wanting to me.

Saturday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should shun ingratitude.

I. POINT.

“Were there not ten made clean? Where are the nine? Only this stranger is found to return and give glory to God” (Luke XVII, 17).

One of the causes why even persons who belong to God, advance but little, and remain almost always in a medium state of virtue without rising to perfection, is because they are not careful to give thanks to God and to glorify Him for His benefits. They readily solicit favors; but they do not think of thanking Him, like certain paupers who ask an alms as if it was their due, without having any feeling of gratitude for what has already been given them, and thus they sometimes excite more indignation than compassion. So, by our ingratitude, we interrupt the course of the divine graces, and we oblige God to close His hands. St. Bernard says, it is perhaps through His mercy, that, seeing us so ungrateful, He refuses what we ask; He fears to be obliged to punish us so much the more, as we should receive more benefits without acknowledging them.

II. POINT.

Gratitude consists not only in words but also in actions. We are ungrateful, if we glory in the good that we have received, if we appropriate it to ourselves, without giving the honor to Him from whom it comes; we are ungrateful, base and perfidious, if we forget benefits, pass them over in silence, still more, if we repay them by ill-treatment: this is shameful, infamous, and intolerable among men; yet we do not blush to act thus every day towards God. We forget His graces, we despise His benefits, we offend Him every hour, with as much boldness and indifference as if we had never

received anything from Him. O detestable ingratitude! If we are humble, we rise from the greatest sins as the publican did; but if we are ungrateful, we fall from the pinnacle of virtue like the pharisee. Sin drove the angels and man from paradise; for ingratitude is the cause, or the first effect of pride.

III. POINT.

If ingratitude is so odious to God and men, if it communicates an infinite guilt to other sins, if it is itself so great an evil, gratitude, which is opposed to it, is an attractive virtue, which wins the heart of God and draws down upon us His most favorable benedictions. It forms a part of justice; for it gives to each one what belongs to him. This virtue, the companion of humility, merits for us the abundance of the graces of God, who is pleased to pour new ones incessantly into a grateful heart. O Jesus, mine, touched by Thy favors, acknowledges that it is insolvent, and that it can never repay Thee for the least of Thy benefits. Thy patience has not grown weary of me: how often hast Thou healed me, cleansed me from the leprosy of sin, loaded me with Thy benefits! May it be my consolation and my joy, to proclaim this loudly, and to confess before all that I owe everything to Thy mercy, without which I should be plunged into the lowest depths of hell.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We cannot serve two masters.

I. POINT.

"No man can serve two masters" (Mat. VI, 24).

God is one in His being, because there can be only one God; He is one in His essence, because it cannot be communicated to any creature; He is one in His life, in His reign and in His love, because the Son lives and

reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost. God is the one only Source of all things, one in power and in sovereignty; and faith which proposes to us one only God in His essence, also obliges us to believe Him and adore Him as the only Lord of the universe. "O Lord, Thou hast made all things" (Ps. CIII, 24); Thou art God, and there is no other God (Ps. LXXVI, 14). Unity of existence, of essence, of greatness, of power, of operation in God, attracts all to Him, that is, to Him alone is due all that we are, and all that we have; to Him alone we owe obedience, love, the sacrifice of our actions, of our lives, of our will and of our whole being, as to our only Creator, our only Master, our only Lord.

II. POINT.

He who will serve two masters, God and the world, who divides his heart and shares his affections, destroys, as far as he can, the unity of God; he places the idol of Dagon near the Ark (1 Kings V, 2); he makes two gods, two masters, two lords. A certain saint said, we must give to one God one heart. Our heart is too little, it cannot love two at the same time; our mind is too limited, it cannot occupy itself with two objects together. We cannot with one glance look at the heavens and the earth: so the heart cannot love two things equally and supremely. Either it will love the one and hate the other, or it will despise the one and esteem the other (Mat. VI, 24). O Jesus, expel from my heart all strange affections, that Thou alone mayst reign in it forever.

III. POINT.

The more we attach ourselves to God by withdrawing from all else, the more we feel ourselves recollected and united to Him, and thus accomplish this prayer: "Father, as Thou art in Me, and I in Thee, that they

may be one in us" (John XVII, 21). Happy union, which exalts man to God, and transforms him into Him by unity of intention, to behold only Him; by unity of heart, to love only Him; by unity of homage and adoration, to serve Him alone; by unity of will, loving, approving, respecting His, and having no other, so that in every event it suffices that God sees it and wills it; finally, by unity of object and occupation, thinking and acting only for Him, as far as can be done here below. This is the one thing necessary, this is the best part which shall never be taken away from him who has chosen it (Luke X, 42). O Jesus, who dost give Thyself entirely to me without reserve in Thy august Sacrament, I give myself entirely to Thee without division. Nothing in my heart for earth, all for heaven, all for Thee!

Monday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Divine Providence in our regard.

I. POINT.

"Is not life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment?" (Mat. VI, 25.)

Will He, who has given you the most, the soul and the body, fail to give you what is necessary for their preservation? Thus Jesus excites us to put our confidence in Him, since He created us. He watches over us continually, He preserves us and has a fatherly care to supply all our needs. O Jesus, my soul belongs to Thee: Thou hast drawn it from nothing; my body is Thine: Thou hast formed it from the slime of the earth. Both have been redeemed by Thy precious blood; every day Thou dost strengthen, repair and nourish both with the divine food of Thy holy body, and the sacred beverage of Thy precious and adorable blood: after that

how could I fear, how could I distrust Thy care and Thy love?

II. POINT.

“Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap; and your heavenly Father feedeth them; consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these” (Mat. VI, 26 to 29). Thus heaven and earth preach to us, and prove to us the admirable providence of God, who, according to the language of Scripture, “feeds the young ravens” (Ps. CXLVI, 9). God takes care even of the animals; He watches over all that He has made; He takes pleasure in adorning, with the greatest magnificence, even insensible things. But if the flowers of the field, which appear in the morning and in the evening are no more, are enriched by His care with the most brilliant colors, what will He not do for man, the cherished object of His paternal affection? Let us rely on Him for every thing, and let us disquiet ourselves only about what could prevent us from serving Him faithfully and loving Him with all our heart.

III. POINT.

“Which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?” (Mat. VI, 27). Jesus, full of goodness, after having excited our confidence in Him by so many different means, places before our eyes our own helplessness; and to show us better our dependence on Him, our need to have recourse to His bounty, He wishes us to rely on His merciful providence alone. Without it what would become of us? What vanity in our thoughts, what uselessness in our cares, what superfluity in all our movements! What do we gain by

dreaming from morning till evening, from evening till morning, planning, toiling and laboring? However little we may reflect, we must acknowledge that there is in all this only sorrow, trouble and vanity. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. IV, 16), except to love God and to serve Him alone.

Tuesday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We ought, first of all, to seek the kingdom of God.

I. POINT.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice."
(*Mat. VI, 33.*)

This search, to have the conditions which Jesus Christ requires, should precede in the mind and the will all other seeking; that is, we should seek the treasures of heaven in preference to those of earth, and regard them as the only real goods, the only ones worthy of our desires and efforts. We should be able to say with the most exact truth, with St. Paul: "I have counted all things but as filth, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. III, 8). Thus the service of God and His love should be so preferred, that we shall be ready to abandon and leave all that is opposed to them, all that does not contribute to His glory and our salvation (St. Francis de Sales).

II. POINT.

"Seek first the kingdom of God." To understand in what this commandment of Jesus consists, we ought to consider the unquestionable principle established by St. Augustine, that God, the sovereign Good in Himself, is the only good that man is permitted to enjoy, created goods having been given to him only for his use. According to this saint, to enjoy a thing is to repose in it, to take pleasure in it, to attach ourselves

to it, to love it only because of itself. To use it simply, is to use it only as a means of obtaining what we love, and what we consider as worthy of our love. The saints enjoy God in heaven, they possess Him, they contemplate Him, they repose in Him, because even here below they enjoyed Him, not indeed seeing Him openly, but seeing Him by faith, and seeking Him only for love of Himself; using the things of this world only in reference to Him, and making them steps to attain to Him.

III. POINT.

“Seek the kingdom of God.” God reigns and will reign always and forever, whether we desire it, or not; whether we seek His glory, or are indifferent to it. If, then, Jesus orders us to seek His kingdom, it is for our interest and not for His; He Himself seeks it for us, He wills and desires our salvation: is it not most just that we should be animated with the same zeal for His glory? Let us seek it, let us desire it with ardor, let us procure it with all our strength. Let us labor to make Jesus reign first in us, absolutely, without contradiction, without reserve; afterwards in the hearts of all creatures, influencing them by our words, exciting them by our examples, and endeavoring to obtain for them by our desires and our prayers, that God may reign over them, that He may be recognized, adored, obeyed, loved, glorified as perfectly, if that were possible, as He is by His elect in heaven, so that these words may be verified in us all: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke XVII, 21).

Wednesday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should walk according to the spirit, and not according to the flesh.

I. POINT.

“*Walk in the spirit*” (Gal. V, 16).

St. Paul says elsewhere, that without the Holy Ghost we cannot form a good thought (I Cor. XII, 3).

This is a truth which we must believe, but with a faith that is effective, and not sterile. It is not sufficient to humble ourselves and to acknowledge the necessity of grace; we should also act and be guided according to the motions of grace, and faithfully co-operate with it. It is vain for us to grow in knowledge, if we do not grow also in virtue; it is vain for us to distinguish the fruits of the Holy Ghost, what He inspires, what He produces in us, from the unhappy fruits of the irregular desires of the corrupt flesh, if we are not careful to repress and destroy the latter, according to the counsel of the great apostle: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. V, 16). Have patience, modesty, charity, and you will have joy and peace by the same spirit.

II. POINT.

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. V, 17). We have within us two laws (Rom. VII, 23), the law of the spirit and the law of sin: these two laws are constantly opposed to one another. The law of sin is that of the old man, of the corrupt man, of whom St. Paul so often exhorts us to strip ourselves (Col. III, 9). The law of the spirit is inspired by the new man, and it is by keeping the law of the spirit, that the new man is formed in us. As Jacob and Esau struggled together in their mother's womb, so these two men so contrary to one another, these two laws, in a word, sin and grace, struggle within us; therefore the life of man on earth is called a warfare, a continual combat (Job VII, 1). Therefore, let us "put on the armor of God" (Eph. VI, 11), "the shield of faith"; let us prepare for the combat, let us fight courageously, because no one will be crowned, unless he has combated faithfully (2 Tim. II, 5).

III. POINT.

“They who belong to Christ, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences” (Gal. V, 24). It is not sufficient to combat; we must conquer. St. Paul does not say merely: Run, but “so run that you may obtain”, that is, win the prize (I Cor. IX, 25). Thus St. Paul had run and combated, when he said: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course” (2 Tim. IV, 7); “there is laid up for me a crown of justice”; and elsewhere: “I am nailed to the cross with Christ” (Gal. II, 19). It was not his natural body that was nailed to it, but his earthly affections, his vices, his passions, which he unceasingly combated, which he constantly crucified, that Jesus Christ might live and reign in him: he spoke from experience, when he said, that those who belong to Jesus Christ, have crucified their flesh and their vices. How just it is that all in me which is opposed to Thee, O Lord, should be crucified! May Thy enemies perish, may they become the victims of Thy justice, that, being delivered from their tyranny, I may profit by the great gift which Thou hast given to men in becoming a victim of propitiation for their salvation.

Thursday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Seek only heavenly goods.

I. POINT.

“Be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek.”

(Mat. VI, 31, 32.)

That strangers in the house of God, that they who do not know Him, or who, knowing Him and fearing Him as God, do not love Him as their father; that they

who hope for no heavenly goods, but only for earthly riches, should seek them eagerly, should trouble and disquiet themselves to acquire and preserve them, is not surprising; they are blind, coarse, ignorant worldlings, who see and know nothing better; but we, who have entered into the house, into the family of God (Eph. II, 19), who have the honor to be His servants, and to eat at His table, we whom He has adopted and numbered among His children, what assurance ought not we to find in His word always infallible, in His goodness necessarily infinite, in His universal foresight, in His boundless power? Let us seek and “labor, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting” (John VI, 27), that which Jesus offers to us at the altar, and the full enjoyment of which He reserves for us in heaven.

II. POINT.

“Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things” (Mat. VI, 33). Jesus, to banish from our minds and our hearts all uneasy care for the different wants of life, reminds us that God knows perfectly all our necessities; that His love for us urges Him to provide for them, and that His power can do so most efficaciously. In fact, it ought to be sufficient for us, that He knows what is wanting to us, since He can do all things: He will surely provide for us, for He has the heart of a father, and of the tenderest of fathers. He regards us as His children; He wishes us to call ourselves His children (1 John III, 1). He gives us the rights of children; He wishes us to call Him by the sweet name of Father, a name of love, of confidence; He has created us for the heavenly inheritance, and He gives us infinitely precious pledges of it, by giving us His only Son, Jesus Christ Himself, in His ineffable

Sacrament; and how shall He who gives us His own Son, not give us all things together with Him? (Rom. VIII, 32).

III. POINT.

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. VI, 33). These words are worthy to be engraved in our hearts! Seek the grace of God with care and assiduity in this life, that in the other you may rest in the glory that is to recompense your labors; or rather seek God Himself, that you may possess Him both here below in suffering, and there above in eternal joy. Lift up your desires, raise your thoughts to heaven, regard all else as nothing. Seek first, that is, before all things, above all things, in all things, Jesus Christ and His kingdom in you; may He reign there absolutely and forever, that you may reign and live in Him and by Him, as His brethren and His members. Seek Him only, as Magdalene did, full of love; she stopped neither at the sepulchre, nor for men, not even for the angels, but for Jesus only, as the one Object worthy to crown her desires. O how happy is the soul that knows Jesus, although she may be ignorant of all else: that seeks and possesses Him alone. With Him nothing can be wanting.

Friday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Poverty in spirit.

I. POINT.

“You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. VI, 24).

We are not forbidden to possess riches; but it is sinful to become their slave. He, who loves God, is the servant of God; he who loves riches, is, in truth, the servant and slave of riches. St. Paul calls it a bondage,

a slavery, an idolatry (Eph. V, 5); and, in fact, the miser is a kind of idolater; for, like the senseless Israelites, who dancing round the golden calf, said: "These are the gods that brought us out of Egypt" (Exod. XXXII, 4), he makes to himself a god of his gold and silver, for to them he sacrifices all the affections of his heart. This sin is more common than we think; for what is more difficult than to possess wealth and not to love it inordinately? Therefore Christ says, that whoever does not renounce all that he possesses, is not worthy of Him, nor can he be His disciple (Luke XIV, 26); and on another occasion He says to us expressly: "You cannot serve God and mammon." It is for us to choose. O Jesus, incomparable Master, to Thee I will attach myself. May I lose all, if necessary, to serve and love Thee. Thou art my riches and my treasure, Thou alone art sufficient for me.

II. POINT.

Jesus wishes to take from our hearts the desire of temporal things, and to plant deeply therein the esteem and love of poverty. Therefore, He has rendered it divine in His person; and His examples, from the crib to the Cross, preach it to us powerfully; for His life was a constant practice of poverty, of suffering, humiliation and labor. The prophet had often said, speaking in His person: "I am poor, and in labors from my youth" (Ps. LXXXVII, 16). O example of Jesus, which, like a sweet and excellent perfume, has drawn so many souls to the practice of voluntary poverty! Let us not blush to follow them; and if we have not the courage to leave all as they did, at least let us learn to be poor and humble in spirit with them.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ makes the virtue of poverty the foun-

dation of the spiritual edifice of evangelical perfection, and He often invites to contempt and renunciation of temporal goods by the unspeakable attractions of the reward. He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. V, 3). To those who leave all to follow Him, He promises a hundred-fold in this world, and, in the other, life everlasting (Mat. XIX, 29) in the enjoyment of inexhaustible treasures in heaven. O magnificent and infinitely advantageous promises! Who will not give earth for heaven, deceitful and fleeting goods for those which are real and eternal? Who will not leave the creature for the Creator? For God, with the possession of His glory, gives Himself also to those who desire only Him, according to these words: I will not that they, who serve Me, should have any inheritance, I Myself will be their possession (Deut. X, 9).

Saturday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to seek the kingdom of God.

I. POINT.

To seek the kingdom of God and His justice is to labor, by the practice of good works, to establish the reign of God within us. Every day we ask that His kingdom may come; but do we make this petition with all our heart? Let us judge by our conduct. We wish sincerely, that God should reign in us, if we subject to Him all our passions, if we submit to Him our thoughts, our desires, the most secret motions of our hearts; if we fear Him, revere and obey Him in all things and everywhere; finally, if we love Him as a son loves his father. O Lord, reign thus over all men; reign thus over me in particular; may all my steps, all my actions be a striking proof that I acknowledge Thee for my

Sovereign, and that I wish to depend upon Thee without reserve.

II. POINT.

There is a great difference between the dominion of God and that of men. A prince commands his subjects, and a master his servants; but both need their services, their assistance, their strength, and their industry: God, on the contrary, has no need of us; we are useless subjects, and "unprofitable servants" (Luke XVII, 10); and if He demands our services, it is for the great advantage which we are to derive from it. He wishes us to be His faithful subjects, that we may merit to be kings with Him, and associated with Him in His kingdom; He wishes us to be His affectionate and obedient servants, in order to render us worthy of the accomplishment of His designs, and to make us share His empire, His authority and His glory. O divine King, always magnificent and liberal in Thy mercy! May my heart be penetrated with gratitude, may it burn with Thy love and with zeal for Thy glory!

III. POINT.

"Seek the kingdom of God" (Luke XII, 31). Alas! how many Christians stray from it instead of seeking it! How many endeavor constantly to escape from the just, the sweet, the advantageous dominion of the Lord! How many desires do we form according to our own inclination, without caring to conform it to the will of God! How many resolutions do we take without consulting Him! How often do we act by our own spirit, without invoking His, notwithstanding His reproaches! (Is. XXX, 1). How often do we rebel against His inspirations and His commands! He wishes us to be meek and humble, and we are harsh and proud; He wishes us to be patient and charitable, and we are self-

willed and censorious. Is not this to destroy, instead of establishing the reign of God? Is not this to say by our works and our conduct, as in the parable: "We will not have this man to reign over us"? (Luke XIX, 14). "O my God, incline my heart to Thy law" (Ps. CXVIII, 36); give me a salutary love for Thy holy will. If hitherto sin has reigned in me, inflicting death, may Thy grace reign in its turn, enabling me to accomplish justice, that I may obtain eternal life in Thy kingdom.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The raising of the widow's son to life.

I. POINT.

"When Jesus came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow, and a great multitude of the city was with her."
(Luke VII, 12.)

Jesus did nothing except for an exalted end, and all His steps were directed by sovereign wisdom. It was not by chance that He came to Naïm; it was to work a great miracle, to glorify His Father, to manifest Him, to make Him known to men, and to lead men to salvation: such were the motives which animated Him in all His works. He did not wish to raise this young man to life in the interior of his house; He did it on the highway, at the gate of the city, and in sight of a large multitude, that all the witnesses of so great a miracle might believe in Him and participate in His graces by a spiritual resurrection, much more advantageous than the corporal resurrection. O Jesus, restore life to my soul, languid, and perhaps dead, through sin; make me live to Thee, and, like Thee, may I seek only to glorify Thy Father, to make Thee known and loved, and contribute to the salvation of souls redeemed by Thy precious blood.

II. POINT.

“Behold a dead man was carried out.” O blessed meeting of life with death! Jesus is the Life which vivifies death itself, for He says: “He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live” (John XI, 25). The darkness is not so quickly nor so easily dispelled by the rising of the sun, as death is rendered living and the dead restored to life by the presence and word of Jesus. “He said: Young man, I say to thee: Arise! And he, that was dead, sat up, and began to speak” (Luke VII, 15). Thus these words were accomplished: “The hour is come, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall live” (John V, 25). O Jesus, infinitely good and powerful, who hast promised that he who shall be nourished with Thy precious blood, shall live forever! Come in Thy august Sacrament to meet my soul, while I am still on the way, lest I go down into the tomb of sin, yielding to temptation. Command me to rise from the bier of my vices and corrupt inclinations, in which I am buried; give me life according to Thy word, make me hear Thy voice, make me obey Thee and live!

III. POINT.

“Jesus, seeing the afflicted mother, said: Weep not” (Luke VII, 13). Formerly death was horrible and hateful; but it has become sweet and desirable through Jesus Christ our Lord. As He lived to sanctify our life, so He wished to die to give life to our souls. Death has become precious in the sight of the Lord since His coming, through the merits of the death which He Himself endured; of this death He says: “Weep not”: for in truth, the death of the body ought not to be wept over, but longed for, since it is the door and entrance to a happier life. Therefore let us often say: “May I

die the death of the just, and may my end be like unto theirs'' (Numb. XXIII, 10). But, says St. Bernard, no one can die the death of the just, if he does not live the life of the just; no one can share in the virtue of the sufferings and death of Jesus, if he does not suffer and die with Him.

Monday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How the spiritually dead are raised to life.

I. POINT.

Jesus was moved with compassion (Luke VII, 13).

Corporal death is an image of a very fatal death, the death of the soul separated from God. As a dead body has no longer feeling or motion, so the soul separated by sin from God, who is her life, falls into insensibility and blindness: she is dumb and motionless, unable to ask and seek her cure; she is not even conscious of her misfortune, because she is proud and haughty in her misery. What then is more miserable? What can move the mercy of God for her, except the tears of the Church, that tender Mother who sighs unceasingly for the conversion of her wayward children, who weeps for those who do not weep for themselves, and who, like madmen, laugh at the tears that are shed for them. God is often moved by the faith and prayers of this sorrowing Dove. Jesus healed the paralytic, moved by the faith of those who presented him (Luke V, 20). He granted the resurrection of Lazarus to the tears of his pious sisters, and that of the young man to the weeping of his afflicted widowed mother. The woman of Cana obtained what she asked through the intercession of the apostles, and all those who were in danger of shipwreck with St. Paul, were saved by his prayer (Acts XXVII, 24); he himself attributed the

success of his preaching to the prayers of the Church. Let us have recourse to the friends of God, to those who are already in heaven, and those who are still living on earth; let us join our sighs and our prayers to the supplications of these protectors, that by them we may obtain what we are incapable of asking, or unworthy to obtain by ourselves.

II. POINT.

If we ought to have recourse to the tears and the prayers of the just, we should also add to them our own. Thus David, after having acknowledged and confessed his sin, was not satisfied, like Saul, to engage a prophet to pray for him; he did not tell him to take upon himself his sin, and to honor him before the people, as this impious prince had done; but after having said as he did: "I have sinned" (1 Kings XV, 24), moved with sorrow and sincere regret, he wept, he mourned, he humbled himself, and, sorrowing, he watered his couch with his tears (Ps. VI, 7); night and day he implored pardon. God said to Samuel: "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, whom I have rejected?" (1 Kings XVI, 1). But Nathan said to David: "God hath taken away thy sin" (2 Kings XII, 13). Let us pray, let us sigh and weep, that we may be worthy to profit by the prayers and tears of the holy souls in the Church, praying for us.

III. POINT.

At the word of Jesus "he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak" (Luke VII, 15). David said: "Rise ye, after you have sat down, you that eat the bread of sorrow" (Ps. CXXVI, 2). These words represent the constant labor and the firmness of true repentance, the repose and tranquillity of heart, which should accompany its sorrow, however keen it may be,

because humility and confidence in God should banish all trouble and uneasiness. "He that was dead, began to speak." Let the penitent speak to accuse himself, and to bless and praise God. Finally, Jesus restored him whole and living to his mother. Let us return to Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us at so great a price (1 Cor. VII, 23); let us return to Him whole and living, preserving the life of grace which He has given us, without ever again losing it by sin. Let us no longer be slaves of men, let us not separate ourselves from our loving Father, who brought us forth on the Cross by His tears, His blood and His sorrows.

Tuesday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Uncertainty of death.

I. POINT.

"The days of man are short, and the number of His months is with Thee; Thou hast appointed his bounds which cannot be passed" (Job XIV, 5).

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. XI, 34). The moment that is to end our days will surely come; but no one knows the hour, the day, or the year. Thou hast enveloped it in impenetrable darkness, in which no one can discover anything, but Thou, O Lord, to whom the darkness is as clear as the light. Only the present moment is ours, that which follows, will perhaps never come to us; we are not sure of it. Who are we, then, who make plans for the morrow! "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee" (Luke XII, 20). What folly to put off our conversion, our good works, our salvation to an uncertain future which is not ours! For He who has promised pardon to the sinner, if he does penance, has never promised him the morrow.

II. POINT.

“Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return, that . . . they may open to him immediately” (Luke XII, 35). God, who loves us and wills our salvation, has hidden from us the moment of our death for many reasons worthy of His wisdom and goodness. He wishes to induce us to watch unceasingly, that we may be preserved in purity of heart, in charity, and the exercise of good works; for this should be the effect of our continual waiting for death, which we are certain is approaching every moment, although we know not the day. To induce us to prepare for it every day by a holy life, Jesus gives us many warnings: Watch, pray, and be on your guard, since you know not when the last hour will come (Mark XIII, 33). “Blessed is that servant, whom, when his lord cometh, he shall find watching; he shall appoint him over all that he possesseth” (Luke XII, 44). “If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour” (Apoc. III, 3). “Watch, for you know not when the Lord will come”, in the evening, at midnight, or in the morning; watch, lest He find you sleeping, and say to you as to the foolish virgins: “I know you not” (Mat. XXV, 12).

III. POINT.

“O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!” exclaims the Wise Man (Eccli. XLI, 1). The means to die well, is to think of it often, to die by anticipation, detaching ourselves from all that can bind us to earth. “In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin” (Eccli. VII, 40). Die to sin, to the world and to yourselves. For the short-lived pleasure of sin shall we

precipitate ourselves into eternal torments? To please the deceitful world shall we risk the certain goods offered to us and promised to our fidelity? To satisfy a blind passion and the demands of our self-love must we lose ourselves? "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Mat. XVI, 26). Let us die, then, daily (1 Cor. XV, 31), as St. Paul did; living with the mind in heaven, and the body as if already in the tomb, always living and acting as if the present hour were our last (St. Francis de Sales).

Wednesday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

At death we shall reap what we have sown.

I. POINT.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked" (Gal. VI, 7).

God sees all; He penetrates the secret of hearts, He reveals their most hidden folds: "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him", to whom we shall render an account of the good as well as of the evil (Heb. IV, 13). He, then, deceives himself, who thinks that he can deceive the Almighty. If nothing can be hidden from His sight, neither can anything escape His judgment; He is the just and sovereign Remunerator, who will "render to each one according to his works". No one shall reap that which he has not sown (Gal. VI, 8), because he will have simply the fruit of his intentions. Our Lord says: "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works" (Apoc. XXII, 12). "O Lord, deal not with us according to our sins; neither reward us according to our iniquities." O Lord, Thy eyes behold all my imperfections (Ps. CXXXVIII, 16); may Thy mercy efface them.

II. POINT.

“What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting” (Gal. VI, 8). To sow in the flesh, is to satisfy its evil desires, to seek the good things, the honors, the pleasures of the world; but from these objects so fleeting, so empty, so liable to corrupt, what can we gather but corruption and death? He who loves perishable things, shall perish with them: the end of his joy will be tears (Prov. XIV, 13); his torments will be in proportion to the glory and delights he has enjoyed (Apoc. XVIII, 7). On the contrary, he who “sows in the tears” of an humble and laborious penance, “shall reap in joy” (Ps. CXXV, 5). They shall return with honor, loaded with the glorious fruits of their labors. The Lord hath “His fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor, and gather the wheat into the barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire” (Mat. III, 12).

III. POINT.

“In doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men” (Gal. VI, 9). Here below is the time to sow, to labor, to combat and to suffer. Often the time seems long; but let us compare it with the interminable eternity which follows, with that new season always tranquil, happy and without change, where we shall enjoy in peace the fruits of our combats and trials. O how light and transitory will these trials then appear! Therefore, let us not be weary, let us never relax in doing good; let us lift our tired hands, let us strengthen our weak knees. Behold the Lord cometh, He holdeth in His hands the fruit of our labors, and He bringeth

the reward with Him (Is. XXXV, 4). "He that shall persevere to the end, shall be saved" (Mat. X, 22). He says to us: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of life" (Apoc. II, 10). Behold I come, "that which thou hast, hold fast till I come" (Apoc. II, 25), lest thy crown be taken from thee. Let not life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor all creatures separate us from Thy service and Thy love, O my God!

Thursday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

On various kinds of death.

I. POINT.

"Weep not" (Luke VII, 13).

Our being is a compound of soul and body; these two live and die, each in its own manner. There is a life and death proper to the body—the physical life and death; there is a life and death proper to the soul—the spiritual life and death. The body lives when united to the soul, by which it is vivified; it dies when it is separated from it. The soul lives spiritually, when united by grace to God, from whom it derives all its spiritual or supernatural movements and actions; it dies spiritually when sin deprives it of grace and causes God to withdraw from it. That the body should die, is comparatively very insignificant, and its death does not merit our regrets. When Jesus Christ exhorts us not to weep, He refers to the death of our body. But it is not so with the death of the soul, for it is truly worthy of all our tears, and the Saviour on the Cross wept over it with tears of blood. It is not of the soul's supernatural death that He says: "Weep not". On the contrary, we cannot weep over it too much; because only tears can repair it and restore life to the dead soul, as David

testifies by these words: "God hath heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps. VI, 9). And what more just cause for tears, than to have offended God, to have lost God, and what in heaven or on earth can indemnify us for such a loss? O Jesus, may I lose all rather than lose Thee! Give Thyself to me, come in to me, to be the soul of my soul, that it may act only by Thee, and be united inseparably to Thee.

II. POINT.

"Weep not", because "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord" (Apoc. XIV, 13), that die in the grace and love of God. "Weep not", because "they rest from their labors", their tears are wiped away, their sufferings are past, "and their works follow them". The wicked take with them none of their glory and riches (Ps. XLVIII, 18), and if their works follow them, it is only that they may be eternally punished by their wicked deeds. But the just, accompanied by their works, leave this world to go to receive their reward, because their works have been good; they die to enjoy a glory and happiness in proportion to their past humiliations and trials. O how blessed is this moment for them, since it is the end of their short pilgrimage on earth, and the consummation of their eternal union with God in heaven!

III. POINT.

There are three ways of dying in grace. Some die in the habit of charity, free from sin, separated from all affection to sin, which they have avoided or expiated, united to God by submission and love; and this is a good death; others, of whom the number is small, die, not only in the habit, but in the act, or actual exercise of divine love; and this is a holy death. Finally, some die by the effort and the violence of this most holy love,

which gradually consumes their natural life, and, as a piercing and burning dart, wounds their heart to reunite it to the object of its love. How precious, how holy is such a death, a death reserved for the most pure Virgin, a death rarely merited, or granted to others. O Jesus, may my heart love Thee to the end; may its last sigh be to unite itself to Thee, may its last pulsation be an effort and a burning act of Thy holy love.

Friday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Death is inevitable.

I. POINT.

"A dead man was carried out" (Luke VII, 12).

There is nothing so inevitable as death. We see in this dead man four circumstances, which could not prevent him from dying:—the vigor of youth, the tears and sorrow of a widowed mother, whose only child he was, riches and a multitude of friends. The life of man, then, is like "a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away" (James IV, 15); it is a shadow which flies, it is a flower which has no sooner bloomed, than it is trampled under foot. Man is only vanity, he passes like a phantom (Ps. XXXVIII, 7), as a torrent which nothing can check, as the smoke which is lost in the air: he lives to-day, and to-morrow he is no more. Let us believe and convince ourselves that we must die: the old cannot live long, and the young may die at any hour. O my God, how easily does he despise all things, who thinks seriously and is fully persuaded that he must die!

II. POINT.

The first man, Adam, by his sin delivered us to death. Having contracted the guilt of his sin, we have incurred the penalty and the chastisement. "God did

not make death'' (Wisd. I, 13), for it is the consequence, the wages of sin (Rom. VI, 23). In this sense, it is infamous and shameful, and should be accepted in a spirit of humility and penance. Death is certain and necessary, but we can convert it into a voluntary sacrifice. I have sinned, I have abused the life which Thou didst give me, O Lord, it is just that it should be taken from me. I have misused my faculties, my powers, it is just that I should lose the use of them. I have flattered and loved this body of sin; therefore, let it be eaten by worms, trampled under foot, and become an object of horror. Instead of seeking Thy glory, I have exalted myself; it is just that I should descend into the dust of the tomb (Ps. LXXXVII, 6), into the land of oblivion, as a useless and broken vessel, that is, I should be entirely forgotten (Ps. XXX, 13). These thoughts will enable us to profit by the necessity of death, to which divine justice has condemned us all.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ, the new man, the second Adam, by His obedience even unto death, caused us to contract a new obligation to die. His obedience was a sacrifice truly worthy of God, and is the model of the resignation with which we ought to submit to the law of death. If Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, chose to undergo this law, if He chose to lose, for our sake, the most excellent of all lives, what mortal man would wish to be exempt from death? Let us honor the life of Jesus by conforming ours to His, but let us rejoice to die, that we may render homage to His death; let us ask of Him, that ours may be sanctified by His, and that He may deign to assist us in our last moments. We have been baptized in His blood and His death (Rom. VI, 4), and have engaged ourselves by our baptism to die with Him

and for Him; therefore, let us immolate our life to Him, employing it all for His glory, being always ready to sacrifice it to Him, and to lay it down in order to obey Him.

Saturday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Death of the sinner.

I. POINT.

"A dead man was carried out" (Luke VII, 12).

David says: "The death of the wicked is very evil" (Ps. XXXIII, 22); and for this we must weep, because it is the consummation of iniquity, it is accompanied by terrors, and followed by endless torments. It rarely happens that he who has lived well, dies ill; and we scarcely see a bad life followed by a good death. The soul of the sinner is cruelly agitated in regard to the past, the present and the future; moments lost, sins committed, good deeds omitted, graces wasted, opportunities neglected, ingratitude to God, all are present to him; he still feels the same attachment to this life. But what he has loved so blindly, he must lose and abandon; the horrors of death and the judgment which is to follow, the sword of divine justice suspended over him, the chastisements that await him: O what dreadful objects! Then, pressed on all sides, he exclaims: "The sorrows of death have encompassed me" (Ps. CXIV, 3); the horrors of hell have surprised me, anguish has contracted my heart; I am in fear and bitterness, the fatal moment is approaching, I can neither avoid it nor retard it; already it has touched me. O terrible moment! How hard, how frightful it is to die! Let us think of it seriously, while there is yet time.

II. POINT.

Of all terrible things, death, according to the philosophers, is the most terrible; but according to faith, sin, which is the death of the soul, is beyond comparison more awful. Yes, sin is, without contradiction, the most horrible thing that can be imagined. At the hour of death we feel all its horrors. The sinner will then have neither hope nor refuge; he will be eternally in the state in which death finds him: "as the tree falleth, so it shall remain"; no more mercy for him, and God will say to him: "I know you not" (Mat. XXV, 12). "Depart from Me, all ye that work iniquity" (Mat. VII, 23). O Jesus, grant that I may anticipate that hour, after which there will be no more time, and that I may do now, what I would then wish to have done.

III. POINT.

We see in the Gospel the picture of what occurs after death: the body is cast out from its own house; it is carried with pomp to the tomb, but there it will become the food of worms and be reduced to ashes; men weep, or pretend to weep; this is the fate of the beauty which we cherish, of the flesh that we flatter, of the body which is often the instrument of the loss of the soul. But the soul, at the instant that it is separated from the body, is presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, there to hear its sentence for eternity; "for it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. IX, 27). O fatal moment for the sinner, moment which ends his pleasures, and begins a misery of which he will never see the end. In vain will then be all his desires, for he will no longer be able to do penance, because "the desire of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. CXI, 10).

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to take the lowest place.

I. POINT.

“When thou art invited (to a wedding), sit down in the lowest place.” (Luke XIV, 10.)

The union of Jesus with His Church is like a mystical wedding, at which the banquet is the Blessed Eucharist. To approach it worthily, we must sit in the lowest place by a simple and humble belief in this great mystery, subjecting our reason to divine revelation, and our senses to faith; for the senses are liable to be deceived. In ancient times Isaac was deceived by his senses, with the exception of his hearing: having felt Jacob, and smelling the sweet perfume emitted by his garments, he thought he was blessing Esau; but, hearing him speak, he said: “It is the voice of Jacob” (Gen. XXVII, 22). So, in the Blessed Eucharist, the sight, the smell, the taste, the touch perceive only bread; the hearing alone, which is the door of faith, is not deceived; it hears these words of the Son of God: “This is My Body” (Mat. XXVI, 26); and we believe firmly that Jesus Christ is really present on the altar. Let us, then, exclaim with Jacob: “Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not” (Gen. XXVIII, 16). O my God, I adore Thee hidden under Thy profound abasement.

II. POINT.

A lively faith in this mystery should produce great respect, profound humility and a holy eagerness to take the lowest place, by the acknowledgment and confession of our sins. The tribunal of penance is that lowest place to which we ought to descend; for as the priests of the Old Law washed in the brazen laver (Exod. XXX, 18) before offering sacrifice to God, so we ought to purify

our souls in the salutary bath of the sacrament before approaching the altar, or the Holy Table, and, penetrated with confusion at the sight of our sins, we also should smite our breasts, cast down our eyes, as the publican did, and not daring to raise them to heaven, we should say humbly with him: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner", for I am most unworthy (Luke XVIII, 13). O Lord, pronounce the words of a merciful absolution over me; for Thou didst say: Call not that unclean which I Myself have cleansed (Acts X, 15).

III. POINT.

Finally, to take the lowest place is to acknowledge the infinite greatness of Jesus and our extreme vileness, His goodness and our malice, His holiness and our corruption; it is to plunge ourselves into our nothingness, in order to adore His supreme majesty hidden in this Sacrament; it is to behold with the eyes of faith the thousands of angels, who are present before Him (St. Chrysostom), and who, seized with holy fear, veil their faces because of the brilliant splendor by which He is surrounded; it is to prostrate ourselves in heart and spirit at His feet, a place infinitely desirable and even too honorable for us, saying with the humble St. Francis de Sales: Who art Thou and who am I, what an infinite distance between Thee and me! I am not worthy to lift my eyes to Thee, still less to receive Thee within me; O Lord, give me all that Thou dost wish to find in me.

Monday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christian humility.

I. POINT.

"Sit down in the lowest place" (Luke XIV, 10).

First, we should abase ourselves interiorly, knowing that if any one thinks himself to be something, he

deceives himself, because, in fact, he is nothing. Whoever esteems and exalts himself, however great and holy he may be, is seduced by his vanity and pride; for all the good that is in him is from God, and he can attribute to himself only falsehood and sin. Let us destroy all haughtiness and presumption, according to the counsel of St. Paul: Do not exalt yourself, do not desire vain glory (Phil. II, 3); seek not high things, but accommodate yourself to the low and humble (Rom. XII, 16). He does not say 'seek', but 'accommodate yourself', that is, do not be satisfied not to exalt yourself, to suffer some humiliation of your own choice; but accept and receive with joy, as a thing that is due to you, all that shall come to you from the part of God and men; this is true humility.

II. POINT.

Christian humility consists not only in knowing our nothingness, our misery, our poverty; this is speculative humility, existing only in the mind. Christian humility passes into the heart and will, and causes and enables us to love abjection and all that tends to abase us before men. St. Bernard says: If, weighing yourself in the scales of truth, you despise yourself in the secret depths of your heart, acknowledging your weakness and your sins, beware of desiring or seeking the esteem of men; take care lest an unjust and proud will should exalt exteriorly that which truth abases within; for he only is truly humble who willingly bears to be despised, and who rejoices in contempt as much as the proud man delights to be honored. He, who is humble of heart, lives happy in contempt, because he is very glad that others should judge him as he judges himself.

III. POINT.

Jesus, knowing the inclination of man, and accom-

modating Himself to it by a merciful condescension, always proposes to us, as the reward of the humility which He prescribes, a true and lasting glory instead of the vain and dangerous glory which He takes away. He says: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke XIV, 11). The prophet says: Because he hath humbled himself, the Lord will have pity on him, according to the multitude of His mercies (Ps. L, 3). Take the lowest place, that you may ascend to the first with honor (Luke XIV, 10). The kingdom of God is only for the little and the humble. And where is the madman who would prefer to be a theatrical king for a few hours on the stage, to the advantage of being really a king, and that forever? Let the truly wise man abase and humble himself during these passing moments, that he may enjoy true happiness throughout the eternity that follows.

Tuesday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should esteem and serve our neighbor.

I. POINT.

"Sit down in the lowest place" (Luke XIV, 10).

We should esteem our neighbor in proportion as we despise ourselves: this is the natural effect of humility, and a practice frequently recommended by St. Paul: Prevent one another with tokens of honor and deference (Rom. XII, 10). Let every one abase himself, considering all others as better than himself (Phil. II, 3). The honor that we render to our neighbor does not consist in a mere human respect, a mere worldly politeness; it should spring from the esteem which we have for God's gifts in him, and the sincere contempt we have of ourselves. The sight of our own defects should occupy us exclusively, without permitting us to

regard those of our brother, when he is not under our charge; and if he has certain faults which we cannot help perceiving, we should excuse them, in the charitable conviction that they are compensated for by virtues and graces which we do not know.

II. POINT.

“Walk with all humility and mildness” (Eph. IV, 2). We learn from these words, that it is not enough to esteem our neighbor, to prefer him to ourselves, to believe him better than we are; our actions must correspond to our sentiments, and, not satisfied with honoring him, we ought to bear with his defects, as St. Paul adds, that, if we find in him bitterness, we should not treat him with sharpness and anger; if he is hard to please, we ought to bear with him, because others have to bear with us; “supporting one another in charity”. We should, then, not cease to be charitable, because others are weak and imperfect; only in this forbearance are real humility and charity shown. To love only those who are amiable, one needs not be a Christian, for this is only human. As we know the physical strength by the weight which the body can bear, so the virtue of the soul consists in enduring what is painful to the spirit, without being depressed. St. Paul says: “We that are stronger, ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak” (Rom. XV, 1), without becoming presumptuous in despising them.

III. POINT.

The commandment to choose for ourselves the lowest place, engages us to serve our neighbor, to offer him kind attentions, after the example of Him who said that He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark X, 45). “I am in the midst of you”, said He to His disciples, “as he that serveth” (Luke XXII, 27).

And when we see Him prostrate before them to wash their feet (John XIII, 5), where can our pride hide itself, or where can we find a place lower than His? What sinner more unworthy than Judas? What men poorer and more repulsive than the apostles? After such an example, shall we consider our brethren as unworthy of our services? Seeing God in our neighbor, we ought not to exclude anyone, for Jesus says: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbors who are rich, lest perhaps they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense, for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just" by God, who will repay thee a hundred-fold what thou hast done for them (Luke XIV, 12).

Wednesday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should always take the lowest place.

I. POINT.

When we are invited to the spiritual nuptials of Jesus with our souls, we should take the lowest place. First, in the communication which we have with Him in prayer. Prayer ought not to exalt us; on the contrary, it should make us enter into our nothingness, because of the infinite disproportion between us and Him to whom we pray. Thou art my Lord and my God, we ought to say, and I am only Thy servant and Thy slave; shall I dare to speak to my Lord, "I, who am only dust and ashes"? (Gen. XVIII, 27). The last place which we ought to occupy in prayer, refers also to the kind of prayer which we ought to adopt, for we

should be contented with the most humble kind, without aspiring, by our own choice, to more sublime prayer, until He who has invited us shall say: "Go up higher" (Luke XIV, 10). It will be enough for us to have thoughts which lead us to true compunction, which move our affections to God, and inflame our hearts with His holy love: this should be the only end of our desires, and it would be a culpable pride to aspire to anything higher.

II. POINT.

We ought also to take the lowest place in the presence of God, to humble ourselves and be confounded before Him by the conviction of our extreme indigence, of our helplessness and unworthiness; to acknowledge that of ourselves, and by our own merits, we have nothing and can do nothing, that we are full of wants, and that our sins have made us unworthy of the graces and mercies of God. I acknowledge, O my Jesus, that I am nothing and have nothing. Be my treasure, and my abundant resource: without Thee I can do nothing, as the twig, which is separated from the vine, is good only to be cast into the fire (John XV, 5). I merit nothing from Thee but to be abandoned and punished; all my hope is only in Thy clemency and infinite goodness.

III. POINT.

Finally, let us seek everywhere the lowest place, since it is due to our sins; let us abase ourselves below all creatures; the vilest and the least of which is better than we, because it is more innocent, and there is nothing so low and so contemptible as sin; let us acknowledge that we are, more truly than St. Paul, the chief of sinners, whom Jesus came to save, because, if God had given to the most unworthy all the graces that He

has bestowed on us, he would perhaps have made a better use of them, for we have so fatal an inclination to evil, and to commit all kinds of sin, that we should constantly fall, if the hand of God did not sustain us. David says: "If the Lord had not been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell" (Ps. XCIII, 17).—O Lord, only Thy mercy has drawn me from the "depths of the abyss" (Ps. LXXXV, 13). Let us descend into this abyss, while we enjoy life; let us descend into it by a sincere acknowledgment that we have deserved it, so that Jesus, touched by our humiliation, may preserve us from being cast into it at our death, and may make us ascend into heaven, there to praise His eternal mercies forevermore.

Thursday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ wishes to dwell in us.

I. POINT.

May God strengthen you "by His spirit with might unto the inward man". (Eph. III, 16.)

St. Paul often asks this of God for the faithful, and this prayer was formerly thought so worthy, so useful, so suitable, that St. Augustine says that it was the form of the benediction which the bishops gave. May God strengthen you in the inward man by His spirit, that is, may you always grow and advance in virtue, in the love of God, in the practice of good works; may Jesus Christ be formed in you, may He grow and be strengthened in you; may His divine life be established and confirmed in you; so that, guided by His spirit and animated by His grace, you may live more and more in Him, by Him and for Him (Col. I, 16). O Jesus, weaken, destroy in me the exterior man with all his passions and self-love, together with all impure and

profane love, upon the ruins of which deign to establish Thy pure and holy love. Come Thyself, to enkindle the divine fire, which Thou didst bring upon earth (Luke XII, 49), and which Thou dost desire to see burning in our hearts; may it reign in mine and possess it forever!

II. POINT.

“May Christ dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. III, 17). Jesus Christ dwells in us, He takes pleasure in us when He finds in us a lively faith animated by His love. He wishes to dwell with us in material temples, that from them He may pass more easily into our hearts. Even more willingly He makes of our hearts temples in which He finds pleasure, in which He establishes His throne and His empire with more satisfaction. “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke XVII, 21). St. Bernard says: As we know that by the Eucharist Jesus really enters into us, hidden under the species of bread and wine, so we ought not to doubt, when we endeavor to imitate and follow Him, that He truly comes to us, and that He dwells in us by faith and by His grace; for, when the love of justice enters into us, He, “who was made unto us justice” (1 Cor. I, 30), enters at the same time.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ, by His Incarnation, wished to dwell among us; “He was seen on earth and conversed with men” (Baruch III, 38). But He wished to do still more; and, in order to give us the fruits of His Incarnation, to apply them to us, “He dwelt in us” (John I, 14). This is the great benefit especially reserved for the New Law, and promised by God through His prophet: “I will set My tabernacle in the midst of them, I will walk among them” (Lev. XXVI, 12). When this Divine

Guest has once entered into us, He does not remain idle; He walks in us, that is, He visits all the parts of our souls and our hearts, to purify, to enlighten, to sanctify all. "I will search Jerusalem with lamps" (Sophon. I, 12). Let us drive all creatures from our heart, that Jesus Christ may reign therein, and fill all our capacity, and possess us entirely. O Jesus, take from my heart all that is displeasing to Thee, and place therein all that is pleasing to Thee.

Friday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The dimensions of charity.

I. POINT.

"That you may comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth" of the great mystery of the Incarnation. (Eph. III, 18.)

St. Paul, in these four words, seems to allude to what Job said of the infinity and immensity of God. "He is higher than heaven, . . . deeper than hell. . . . The measure of Him is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job XI, 8, 9). We also find herein the qualities of the charity of God for us: its length, in that patience in waiting so long for us; its breadth, in His inclination to do good to all, even to His greatest enemies; its height, in the determination by which He drew us from the inexpressible abasement to which sin had reduced us, to elevate us to the pinnacle of glory; its depth, in the gratuitous choice, by which, without any merit on our part, He called us to Himself, and predestined us to be eternally happy with Him in heaven. O immense and ineffable charity of God, to which we can never sufficiently correspond!

II. POINT.

"That you may know the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. III, 19). St. Augus-

tine explains these and the preceding words by the four dimensions of the cross of Jesus Christ. According to him, its length represents to us that, since the creation of the world, no one has been saved or justified, except by the merits and sufferings of Jesus on the Cross; its breadth, that the universal Church, spread throughout the earth, issued from the side of Jesus Christ, dying on the Cross; its height, that the excellence and sublimity of the glory to which we are elevated, have come to us by the ignominy and the humiliations of Jesus Christ crucified, signified by the depth of this same Cross. O my God, may I be ignorant of all things, provided that I possess the great knowledge of Jesus Thy Son, and of Jesus crucified (1 Cor. II, 2). May I comprehend His ineffable charity, and may I render to Him love for love!

III. POINT.

If we know how to grasp the love, the charity of Jesus Christ in its vast extent, in all its dimensions, we shall recognize it and correspond to it by a boundless charity, for St. Bernard says: The measure of loving God is to love Him without measure, to love Him with a charity which will make us embrace every means to please and glorify Him, and obey all His commands, enlarging our hearts to love, in Him and for Him, all those who belong to Him: in this consists the breadth of charity. The length is our perseverance in this love, which all the waters of tribulation should not quench (Cant. VIII, 7), which ought, on the contrary, to gain therefrom fresh strength and grow more ardent. The height is the purity and sublimity of our intentions in divine love; we should regard God alone, for He alone is worthy to be loved for His own sake. The depth is humility, which renders our love wise and enlightened,

to discern what God is, and what we are, and to annihilate ourselves before Him. O Lord, why have I not an immense capacity to love Thee! At least, O Lord, I will, for Thy own sake, love Thee, who art my strength (Ps. XVII, 2), by a sincere acknowledgment of Thy greatness and of my lowness; I will love Thee without ever ceasing, either in time or in eternity.

Saturday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Necessity of humility.

I. POINT.

“When thou art invited (to a feast), go, sit down in the lowest place.”
(Luke XIV, 10.)

We are called to a mysterious supper, to the spiritual and divine nuptials, and of these the voice from heaven says: “Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Apoc. XIX, 9). To merit admittance, that is, to enter into the eternal glory which the Lamb of God Himself has merited for us by His abasement, we must abase ourselves with Him, choose and take the lowest place after His example. We shall attain to this by an humble and sincere faith, which destroys the pride of human counsels, for they are always in opposition to God; which makes our understanding captive under the yoke of Jesus Christ; which leads us to prefer the opprobrium and folly of the Cross to all worldly knowledge and greatness; for humility is the foundation of true faith, as pride is the source of error. O Jesus, who art the wisdom and the power of God, Thou, who, by the weakness of Thy Cross, hast confounded the wisdom and the power of the world, destroy my pride, and give me a faith firm, pure and humble, living by charity, and active in good works!

II. POINT.

Being unquestionably called to the heavenly nuptials, we should endeavor to correspond to the call and to be of the small number of the elect. The more exalted the position, the more we must humble ourselves to attain it. The last place of human life is the tomb. Let us enter into this last place, by an attentive consideration of our last end. What is more efficacious to subdue pride, to conquer ambition and irregular desires, than the contemplation of death, which will reduce us to corruption and ashes, and which will place us among the things that are no more? Then the proud will say, as it is written of them in the book of Wisdom: "What has pride profited us, or the boasting of our riches?" (Wis. V, 8). All these things have passed as a shadow, as a ship which rapidly glides through the water, as a bird that cleaves the air, without leaving any trace of its passage.

III. POINT.

We should take the lowest place; walking and serving God in the spirit of humility and compunction, "working out our salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil. II, 12); for humility is the foundation of the spiritual edifice. The pinnacle of this edifice should be elevated even to the vision and the eternal enjoyment of God (St. Aug.); and the higher it is, the deeper should be the foundation. Therefore, Jesus Christ pronounced these words: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. XVIII, 3); it is a general rule which has no exception, that "whosoever exalteth himself, shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted" (Luke XIV, 11). "Jesus Christ humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross; therefore God

hath exalted Him and given Him a name, which is above every name" (Phil. II, 8). We must humble ourselves with Him, if we wish to be exalted with Him. O precious humility, seed of glory, rendered divine in Jesus, be the inseparable companion of my life!

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to love God and our neighbor.

I POINT.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God": on this commandment "dependeth the law and the prophets".

(Mat. XXII, 37.)

All the commandments are reduced to love, because they cannot be accomplished or properly observed, except by love, which is so essential to religion, that it is only by love that we are Christians (St. Francis de Sales). Love distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil, the Christian from the Jew (St. Aug.). Therefore Jesus, who came to form for His Father a faithful people and true adorers, said: "I am come to spread fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled" (Luke XII, 49). God is, in fact, adored and honored only by those who believe in Him, who hope in Him, and, above all, who love Him; therefore, He formed His Church, sending from heaven, on the day of Pentecost, the divine flames of His love (St. Aug.). It is a deplorable misfortune, that a commandment so holy, and, at the same time, so indispensably necessary, should be regarded with indifference, as an arbitrary degree of perfection reserved for the cloister, and which it is not important to acquire. How detestable is this error, for it is the source of impiety and of every kind of vice.

II. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart” (Mat. XXII, 37), that is, with all our affections and all our will. This word, *all*, as St. Basil remarks, is opposed to division, and teaches us that we ought not to divide our love between God and the creature; for what we give to the creature is a theft from God, of a part of the heart which should belong to Him alone. As God is all the fulness of good, the perfection of charity, He cannot bear that we offer Him only a part of ourselves, or do not seek Him with our whole heart, without reserve or division (St. Bernard). If this commandment seems difficult, let us consider the manner in which Jesus gives Himself to us in the Eucharist; in it He lavishes upon us His humanity and His divinity with all the graces of which He is the source. Who will not be moved by a love so liberal, so magnificent, who will not give Him love for love, and all for all?

III. POINT.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor” (Mat. XXII, 39). If God alone ought to be loved, how is it that here He orders us to love our neighbor? It is because the love that we owe to the neighbor, if it is well regulated, does not diminish in any way that which we ought to have for God. On the contrary, we may say, and it is even an unalterable truth, that the love of the neighbor perfects it, completes it, and proves it. Therefore, Jesus assures us that the commandment to love our neighbor is like that of the love of God. It is like it, because, to love our neighbor, according to the command which God gives, is to love God Himself, since it is to love our neighbor because God wills it, because our neighbor belongs to God, and because God honors him with His own love. Hence the love we have for our neighbor, is

a dependence, an overflow, an effect of our love for God. To separate these two loves would be to destroy them both. O my God, may I love Thee! May I love all men, not excepting a single one; but may I love them in Thee!

Monday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How we should love God.

I. POINT.

“Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart” (Mat. XXII, 37).

Then, after a little while, He asked the pharisees: “What think you of Christ?” (Mat. XXII, 42). Here are two passages which contain the whole doctrine of salvation and eternal life: to love and to know God. To love men, we must first know them; but we know God well in proportion as we love Him well; love for Him precedes knowledge. We must love Him before we can appreciate His attractions, before we see His divine perfections, before we can penetrate their depth. David said: “Taste and see how sweet the Lord is” (Ps. XXXIII, 9). Draw near to Him and you will be enlightened: in this sense Jesus said of His precursor, that “he was a burning and a shining light” (John V, 35). At first, we must attach ourselves to God with the heart; afterwards, the mind will occupy itself with Him without difficulty. Yes, O Jesus, my Lord, my sovereign good, here below and in heaven my eternal life consists in knowing and loving Thee. Grant, then, that I may love Thee, in order that I may know Thee, and that, knowing Thee, I may advance in Thy holy love.

II. POINT.

True love of God consists, first, in an esteem for the Supreme Good as infinitely amiable and desirable

above all things. Let us say to ourselves, as Jesus said to the Jews: What think you of Jesus Christ? What think you of His greatness, of His goodness, of His power, of His mercy? How adorable He is, how incomparable in His divine perfections, how worthy to be loved and served, praised and glorified? How worthy He is to win our affections, to occupy our hearts and our minds, to attach our will to Himself, to subject it to His own! The love that we ought to have for God, should make us prefer Him to all, and render us steadfast in His holy service. What, then, shall separate us from His love? Shall it be tribulation or anguish, things present or things to come? Let us declare boldly "that neither life nor death, nor any creature shall ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. VIII, 38).

III. POINT.

To this love of esteem, which is essential to charity, we should join the ardor of our affections and all the tenderness of our heart; esteem for God makes us love Him with a love of preference, of blind submission, attachment and obedience. The tenderness of this love unites us inseparably to Him, makes us fervent in good works, ardent, prompt, ready to do all that can please and glorify Him, solely attached and attentive to Him, loving Him, thinking only of Him and desiring only Him. "What have I in heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (Ps. LXXII, 25, 26). A love of esteem and affection which should enable us to fulfil this precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole mind."

Tuesday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should have but one heart and one soul with our neighbor.

I. POINT.

“Be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. IV, 3.)

St. Paul forbids us in another of his epistles, to be solicitous for the things of the world (1 Cor. VII, 32); but here he permits it, and even seems to order us to maintain peace and union with our brethren. He wishes us always to be attentive to preserve a treasure so precious, that, as the Holy Ghost united the first faithful in one heart and one soul (Acts IV, 32), this union may continue among all the children of His Church. Whatever inequality there may be between them, He wishes to re-unite them by love, as a fire composed of different kinds of combustibles. This union should be with all, without exception, even with those who treat us most unjustly; and this St. Paul recommends so often and with expressions so earnest and powerful, because it is so difficult and so opposed to our fallen nature. St. Bernard says: Let our minds and our hearts be united, loving one same God, seeking only Him, attaching ourselves to Him alone, having all the same sentiments.

II. POINT.

St. Paul says: Let there be among you but “one body and one spirit” (Eph. IV, 4); and in another place: “You are the body of Christ, and members of member” (1 Cor. XII, 27). The great apostle is never weary of recommending to the faithful, what Jesus Christ did not cease to ask for them of His Father: “That they may be one, as We are one” (John XVII, 11). This perfect union scarcely exists except in speculation; to put it in practice, we must be filled with the

love of God. We are very exacting in regard to our own interests, and very indifferent to those of others; but this union results naturally from the principle advanced by St. Paul, as he says elsewhere: "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep" (Rom. XII, 15); to do this is really to be one same body. "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. XII, 26); if one rejoices, all the others rejoice, and all this springs from the great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mat. XXII, 39).

III. POINT.

"You are called in one hope . . . , one God and Father of all" (Eph. IV, 4). God promises the same recompense to all the elect: however different may be the gifts which He distributes to them, He gives to all one same end, which is to gain eternal life. We must attain to this unity of glory and felicity, by unity of love; we do not run well to acquire this divine reward, if we are not united in heart to those who run with us; one same God demands adorers united in sentiment; one same Father wishes children who love each other as true brethren. The prophet says: Is it not true that we have all but one same Father, and one same God, who has created us? Why, then, does any one despise his brother? (Mal. II, 10). Let us unite to adore the same God, to love the same Father, who is above us all by His power, who governs us all by His providence, who is in us all by His presence.

Wednesday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Excellence of charity.

I. POINT.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Mat. XXII, 37).

The first excellence of charity by which we love God above all things, is that it is the soul and the life

of all the other virtues; it completes and perfects them, and renders all their acts meritorious; for charity is the source of all merit, it imparts value and dignity to all our actions, sanctifies them, exalts those which are in themselves indifferent, and even the most insignificant, to a supernatural state, rendering them holy and pleasing to God. Like a fire sent from heaven, charity purifies all, changes all into itself; to it the reward is given; it is the weight of the scales of the Sanctuary, giving value to our works. God weighs our deeds, and regards not so much their number and the labor which they cost, as the love which animates them. Finally, we may say that "all good things come to us together with her" (Wis. VII, 11), since charity contains in an eminent degree faith, hope, the fear of God, true contrition and all the other virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; hence the great St. Augustine says: Love is sufficient; love, and do what you please.

II. POINT.

Charity is so excellent, so divine, that a single act of it is worth more than heaven and earth, and all the physical world; it could not be acquired by all the labors of angels and men, though they should continue till the day of judgment, and through the vast extent of eternity, if the grace of God did not intervene. Nothing less than the sufferings and death of a God could merit for man the power to perform a single act of charity; such an act gives us a right over God Himself, the right to possess Him forever in glory; for God is Himself the reward, the life, the joy of those who love Him. A single act of charity, if real and perfect, reconciles us with God, makes Him forget all our past sins, and opens heaven to our enjoyment.

III. POINT.

Charity, so powerful and so efficacious in itself, is also indispensably necessary, so that, without it, the greatest virtues cease to be virtues, and good works remain useless, dead and without soul. St. Paul says: "If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity never faileth" (1 Cor. XIII, 1 to 8). It shall continue in heaven, therefore it is called "the greatest of all the virtues". Let us begin to love here below, that we may continue to love in eternity; let us seek this precious pearl, let us risk all for it, for, though a man should give all his goods to acquire it, he would think he had it for nothing. Grant it to me, O Lord, and after that, do with me and with all that is mine, whatever it shall please Thee.

Thursday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We must live up to our vocation.

I. POINT.

"Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."
(Eph. IV, 1.)

St. Peter says: Bless God, "who hath called you from darkness to His admirable light" (1 Pet. II, 9). This is our vocation. We are called to the light of glory in heaven, and upon earth to holiness, which is the way to glory, and to which we are constantly invited by the

light of the holy Church. Thus by the light we seek the light, by fidelity to grace, by a correspondence to its motions, we correspond to our vocation. Laboring to sanctify ourselves by the love of God, and the practice of good works, we walk in a manner worthy of it, and we prepare in this valley of tears steps in our hearts, to ascend from virtue to virtue, till we have attained the end of our vocation, which is nothing less than to possess God, the God of gods in the heavenly Sion (Ps. LXXXIII, 8). Let us receive the Bread of the strong, which is given to us at the altar, that, being nourished and sustained by it, we may, by its virtue, walk with courage and arrive at the mountain of God.

II. POINT.

The vocation, according to which the apostle exhorts all to live, should be understood also of the particular vocation of each one; for every one is obliged to fulfil the duties of his state, and to produce fruits of penance and holiness: "Much will be required from him, to whom much hath been given" Luke XII, 48). Often a man is esteemed by the world, who is not approved by God; and, in fact, God weighs the minds and hearts in His balance (Jer. XVII, 10); He weighs them with His own weight, judges them according to His rules, expects from each one according to the graces which He has given him, and according to the state in which He has placed him. Very different are the duties of the bishop, of the father of a family, of the virgin, of the married woman, of the priest, of the religious, of the layman, of masters and of servants, of the king and of the subject: all must serve and love God; but the effects and fruits of this love must be differently applied according to the various designs of the Supreme Judge, who disposes of His creatures and employs them

as He pleases. Let us labor as faithful servants, profiting by the talent confided to us, whatever it may be; let us render to God all that He expects from our fidelity.

III. POINT.

“Walk worthy of your vocation.” We walk worthily, when we walk with humility. Humility is for all conditions, although it is practised differently in each; therefore St. Paul adds: Practise humility, meekness and patience (Eph. IV, 2) in all things, in your words, in your demeanor, in your habits, in your actions: all must be regulated by humility at all times and towards all, rich and poor, perfect and imperfect, friends or enemies. Humility produces meekness, which enables us to endure without bitterness the defects of others, their bad humor, their unfavorable dispositions towards us. St. Chrysostom says: Humility is nothing, if it is not meek and patient. Jesus Christ made these virtues inseparable, saying: “Learn of Me, that I am meek and humble of heart” (Mat. XI, 29). Humility and meekness are a double virtue, and form, as it were, but one; but both will have a very great reward.

Friday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for loving God.

I. POINT.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

God should be loved for His own sake, because He alone is infinitely lovable; He should be loved for our own sake also, because there is nothing more profitable to us. These are two excellent motives for our love; what God is in Himself, and what He is for us; His dignity and our advantage, His glory and our salvation. “He that cometh to God, must believe that He is”

(Heb. XI, 6), and that He is the faithful Rewarder of those who seek Him. Let us love Him, because He is worthy of love, because such a love alone is just and legitimate, and alone can sanctify and save. It is infinitely profitable to us; let us love God, because not only He will recompense us, but because He is the eternal reward of those who love Him.

II. POINT.

God is "He who is" (Exod. III, 14). This first motive includes the abyss of His divine essence. He is "He who is", subsisting alone by Himself. He is, then, lovable and worthy to be loved, not as men are, because of foreign qualities which they have received, but because of His own, because of His goodness which is His very essence, because of His divine perfections, infinite and innumerable, which exclude all evil and all defects; His holiness, which is the source of all holiness in the angels and the saints, and which the seraphim celebrate and adore. O God, lovable in Thyself, who art the occupation of the saints in heaven, and who dost render them blessed, grant that, like the seraphim, we may burn with ardent love for Thee. May this love inflame us, as it is called in Holy Scripture "a consuming fire" (Heb. XII, 29).

III. POINT.

The other motive for loving God is still God Himself; but God considered as our Lord, our Rewarder, and according to the relations which it pleases Him to bear to us, as well in the greatness of His divinity, as in the humility of His flesh, also as our great Benefactor. For if benefits are bonds which draw and powerfully engage hearts to love, who will not love a God so good, so magnificent, so liberal! He created us out of nothing by His power, He preserves us, rules us, governs us,

and gives us all spiritual and temporal goods. He has redeemed us at the dear and precious price of His life and His blood. He sanctifies us by His merits, and promises us the eternal reward which He has acquired for us by His labors; in a word, He, having become man for love of us, entirely transformed Himself into love, and became our All, in all His different states (St. Bernard). O my God, may I love Thee, and Thee only!

Saturday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The barren fig tree.

I. POINT.

*"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard."
(Luke XIII, 6.)*

The Christian is this fig tree, planted by the hand of God in His vineyard, which is the Church. How and why does He threaten to root us out from this holy land? We learn it from the Gospel; it is because, when He comes to seek fruit, He finds none. Alas! We are often barren trees! We have only leaves and we repose in their shade. We have only words or sterile thoughts, at the most some good desires, and we deceive ourselves, mistaking them for the effects of a firm and sincere will. These reproaches of Jesus Christ are addressed to us: "Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead; I do not find thy works full before My God. . . . Thou sayst: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. III, 1—17). Let us tremble, let us humble ourselves with the saints, that we may be saved with them. St. Paul says: "I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not hereby justified" (1 Cor. IV, 4). And we with

an ulcerated conscience, loaded with iniquities and injustice, how shall we not fear?

II. POINT.

“For these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none; cut it down, therefore: why cumbereth it the ground?” (Luke XIII, 7). How many there are whom God has borne with much longer, whom He has called; He has waited for their penance, and they have not produced any good fruit. Yet we see that God sets bounds to His long expectation. His patience has a limit, after which He allows His justice to act, if we are not careful to avert it by our fidelity. His justice rises up against us, and makes Him say: Why is this tree without fruit? Why does this ungrateful soul still occupy a place in My house? Why does she receive numberless graces, which would sanctify countless souls? “If in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes” (Mat. XI, 21). Let this soul, this barren tree, be rooted out, cut down and cast into the fire (Luke XIII, 7); “why cumbereth it the ground?” He certainly occupies it unprofitably, who injures others by bad example, and who does not fulfil the duties of his state, by suitable good works.

III. POINT.

“Let it alone this year also, until I dig about it, and dung it” (Luke XIII, 8). Let it alone this year also: these words perhaps regard us; how do we know whether this year will not be the last of our life? God leaves it to us still, to repair, by our good works, the previous years spent without fruit. Let us pray to the divine Gardener, to labor in us, and let us second His labor by our own, that we may improve the barren land

of our soul. Let the ministers of the Lord, who guide us for Him, pray for us; let them place themselves between God and us, like Moses, to appease His anger, and arrest His hand ready to smite us. Let them dig round the tree, that is, let them humble us by salutary remonstrances, pointing out our interior defects; let us receive their admonitions humbly, saying with David: "Let the just man correct me in mercy and reprove me" (Ps. CXL, 5). Finally, let us spread manure round the tree, by an humble confession of our miseries; let us begin to dislike the very things which gave us a pleasure so ill-founded. To be seated on a dung-hill like Job, says St. Gregory, is to have an humble opinion of self. By abasement, submission and contrition of heart, our souls will no longer be barren, but fruitful: God will find fruit, and we shall find favor before Him.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ forgives sins.

I. POINT.

Jesus said to the paralytic: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." (Mat. IX, 2.)

Sins can be pardoned only by Jesus; He alone, as the principal agent, forgives them; He is the only "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" (John I, 29). The priests, as His vicars, pronounce the sentence of absolution; but He must ratify it in heaven, according to these words: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (Mat. XVI, 19). He left to His Church this power, which is derived from His own, or rather which is the same power communicated to His ministers, a power by which sins are forgiven, souls sanctified, hell closed and heaven opened; therefore we ought, with the faith-

ful people, to "glorify God, who gave such power to men" (Mat. IX, 8).

II. POINT.

"Thy sins are forgiven thee." They who approached Jesus to recover corporal health, generally received, at the same time, the cure of their souls; for the works of God are perfect (Deut. XXXII, 4). He made man entire, He is pleased to repair him entirely; He came down to earth chiefly to destroy sin, to close the mortal wounds which it had inflicted in our souls, to heal spiritual maladies; but afterwards, by an emanation from His fulness, there went forth from Him a virtue (Luke VI, 19), which poured itself upon the body to deliver it from all kinds of evils. O Jesus, inexhaustible source of all good, fountain of life, of health and holiness! "heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee" (Ps. XL, 5). Heal my heart and my body, "and I shall be healed" (Jer. XVII, 14); I shall be sound in both.

III. POINT.

"Thy sins are forgiven thee." O admirable mercy of Jesus, most loving goodness which shines forth in these tender words: "Son, be of good heart"! Liberal and beneficent goodness, by which He gives more than we ask; for the paralytic was presented to Him, only to obtain a corporal cure, and Jesus grants him the health of his soul, pardoning all his sins: "Thy sins are forgiven." O Jesus, speak to me these consoling words, so desirable, so salutary; refuse not to the ardor, the perseverance and the sincerity of my desires this precious grace, which Thou dost pour forth to-day so gratuitously; and since Thou dost give Thyself to me, O Lord, in Thy august and ineffable Sacrament, grant me this first favor, which alone can make me worthy to

receive Thee: purify me in Thy adorable blood, and I shall be clean; “wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. L, 9).

Monday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

What the sinner must do to amend.

I POINT.

“Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.”

(*Mat. IX, 6.*)

The first thing that the sinner ought to do, is to rise. “Rise”, says St. Paul, after Jesus; “rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee” (Eph. V, 14). The bed of the soul is, according to Scripture, every pleasure that does not tend to God. Vanity is the bed of some; earthly goods and riches are the bed of others: each one has his favorite passion, in which he reposes with complacency; and it is from this bed that we must rise. We should detach ourselves from low and earthly affections, to raise ourselves to the Supreme Object, drawing and calling us. Let us break the bonds that bind us to earth, and let us arise to go to the Lord, to correspond to the attractions of His grace. If we sometimes fall back on the bed of our evil habits, as David complained, let us rise up quickly and say courageously with him: Strengthen me, O Lord, by the virtue of Thy word (Ps. CXVIII, 28).

II. POINT.

“Take up thy bed.” Hitherto it was not you who carried your bed, but your bed that carried you; you did not govern your passions; they guided you and led you according to their pleasure, you reposed in them; but here our Lord comes to say to your soul: “Take up thy bed”; master your passions, let them no longer rule

you, use them as grace demands. What is it to take up our bed, but to bear our cross? It is the duty of the sinner who has become penitent; he must carry his bed humbly, that is, he must bear with resignation the infirmities, the maladies, the afflictions, the sufferings, which are the fruits and consequences of the vain pleasure which he once found in sin. Let him accept them, let him add to them the severity, the mortifications, the labors of penance, that, following Jesus Christ, he may reach his house, the house of a blessed eternity.

III. POINT.

“Go into thy house.” St. Paul teaches us what this house is, to which Jesus sends us. He says: We have a house, divine, built not by man, but by the hands of God Himself (Heb. XI, 10); a house which is not on earth where everything perishes, but is “eternal in the heavens”. Whence comes it that we so often slumber in the love and the thoughts of the world, unless because we neglect to walk, to advance towards our true home? We lose sight of it, with all the goods that await us there! We ought constantly to aspire after this heavenly abode, that we may not relapse into the dangerous slumber of sin upon the fatal bed of our passions. God, wishing us to love only heaven, often mingles bitterness and disgust with our occupations here below, lest the traveler, who is seeking his true country, should mistake the inn, which is the world, for his home, which is heaven. Let us sigh to reach it, let us salute it from afar, and may all the moments of our life be so many steps to advance us on the way, and render us worthy to enter into that blessed abode!

Tuesday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

We should thank God and await Christ's second coming.

I. POINT.

"I give thanks to my God always for you", says St. Paul (1 Cor. I, 4); and in another place he adds: "Give thanks to God in all things" (1 Thess. V, 18). The life of a Christian should be a continual thanksgiving, because it is a continual succession of the gifts of God; and whether the Christian regards himself individually, or whether, like St. Paul, he regards the favors poured upon the whole body of the Church, he must always acknowledge that grace is never wanting to him. And for himself and others He should constantly thank God, who is the Author of grace, and who, through His goodness, distributes it as liberally as gratuitously. He enlightens us, He strengthens us, He promises, He gives to us, He shows us His love in a thousand ways. He says: "I will not now call you servants. . . . But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you" (John XV, 15). And what ought I to have done for you, that I have not done? O Lord, may my heart, penetrated with gratitude, do all for Thee. Thou hast left nothing undone for my salvation, and, if I am lost, my ruin comes from myself alone (Osee XIII, 9); I can reproach only myself.

II. POINT.

"Waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. I, 7). So many treasures and spiritual riches with which God loads us, are however only a foretaste, a blessed expectation of the manifestation of Jesus Christ. When this day shall come, then it can be said with still more truth, that nothing is wanting to

the just, and that nothing can be added to the happiness and glory with which they are clothed in their bodies and their souls. In this great day the chief cause of their joy and satisfaction, that which will touch them the most, and will be the beginning of their beatitude, will be to see their august Head, triumphant, glorious, full of majesty, who after having made "His enemies His footstool" (Ps. CIX, 1), will make His children reign with Him and will share His empire and happiness with them forever.

III. POINT.

"Waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." What ought we not to do in this expectation? It should excite us equally to fear and love. What ought we not to do, to render favorable to us the great day which shall decide our eternity, that day, in which we shall all appear at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, to render to Him an exact account of all our actions. Let us take care now, let us watch, with Job, let us fear for all our works, that they may be found full and worthy of God. Let us sigh for that blessed moment when we shall see Jesus in His glory, when we shall be re-united in all our members, to glorify the only and supreme Object of our beatitude and love, where His reign will be made perfect in us. O Jesus, may "Thy Kingdom come" (Mat. VI, 10). "Rule in the midst of Thy enemies" (Ps. CIX, 2). May all the nations whom Thou hast created, humble themselves before Thee. As for me, I shall not be fully satisfied till the day in which Thy glory shall appear in all its splendor (Ps. XVI, 15).

Wednesday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Jesus forgives sins.

I. POINT.

“Whether is easier to say: Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say: Arise and walk?” (Mat. IX, 5.)

The remission of sins is the greatest and most worthy work of Jesus on earth; by it He shows Himself true God. Therefore the Jews said: “Who can forgive sin, but God only?” (Mark II, 7). God said by the prophet: “I am He that blots out thy iniquities” (Is. XLIII, 25). But this power, which our Lord has as God, to forgive sins on earth, He possesses and exercises in a manner proper to Himself. Under the Old Law, God effaced sins by punishing them; Jesus takes them away by pardoning them; God formerly exterminated sinners with the sin (Eccli. XXVII, 3), and now sins are destroyed and sinners are saved. O mercy of Jesus in the New Law, capable of gaining all sinners! O Jesus, by Thy ineffable mercy, destroy all my sins, and save my sinful soul.

II. POINT.

To make of a sinner a just man, is, according to St. Augustine, a more wonderful work, than to create heaven and earth, because, as he says, He who made you without your help, will not save you without your co-operation. He made you without your having been able to will or desire it, but He will not save you, if you do not desire it, if you do not will it efficaciously. The creation is a work of the power of God, acting alone absolutely and supremely, and justification is an effect of His mercy, which wishes to be aided by the co-operation of our will, although in itself blind, weak and often misled. St. Paul says: “Yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. XV, 10). God, to create the

world, "spoke, and all things were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. CXLVIII, 5); but that man may be justified and his sins forgiven, God speaks, suffers and dies; for this He said great things, He did admirable things, and He suffered very unworthy things. O Jesus, how much I have cost Thee! At what a price hast Thou purchased my salvation! How is it that I risk it every day for a mere nothing!

III. POINT.

"That you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, Jesus said to the paralytic: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose, and went into his house" (Mat. IX, 6). Jesus proves His mission and His absolute power to forgive sins and justify souls, by working a brilliant miracle, making a paralytic walk and sending him away, full of health and strength, loaded with the bed, which had borne him but a moment before. By this exterior and visible effect of His power and goodness, He shows what He accomplishes invisibly in the interior, by the authority of His grace and the power of His love, which converts the heart and subjects the will. Make me feel this sweet experience, O Lord; my will, too often rebellious, desires at last to follow and obey Thee: "my heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready" (Ps. CVII, 2). Act powerfully on me according to Thy great mercy.

Thursday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Trust in Christ for the remission of sins.

I. POINT.

"Son, be of good heart" (Mat. IX, 2).

How full of consolation and joy are these words for all that seek God sincerely! But they who do not seek

God with an upright heart, easily misconstrue them; full of sins, of love of the world and of themselves, they are also full of confidence, or rather of a rash presumption that they will attain salvation, notwithstanding their many wanderings from that narrow way which leads to it. Sometimes the devil excites distrust in sincere souls, as in relaxed souls he excites a proud confidence. His design is that the former should not advance in good, and that the others should never withdraw from evil, two dangerous rocks equally to be avoided. "Son, be of good heart": this confidence should be full and entire for children, for those who love God as their Father, or who, at least, moved by the sincere desire to love Him, which is the beginning of love, groan and sigh unceasingly, as St. Augustine did. O Beauty ever ancient and ever new, too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee!

II. POINT.

"Son, be of good heart." A son who loves his father, and thinks that he is loved by him, addresses himself to him with confidence. He is not ashamed to show him his sores, to make known to him his diseases, well assured that he will have compassion on him. Let us go to God in this manner; let not our sins separate us from Him who alone can heal them. As soon as they are displeasing to us, we are no longer displeasing to Him, and He pardons them, however grievous they may be (St. Aug.). What crime was more unpardonable than that of the Jews? Yet, by a prodigy inconceivable to all men, the blood of the physician became the remedy of the sick who shed it; His death was the cure of those who took away His life. Many being converted to Him, whom they had put to death, obtained the pardon of their crimes, of the parricide and the deicide

committed in His person. Who, then, will not hope for everything from such goodness? Who will not say with the prodigal: "I will go to my father" (Luke XV, 18), although I am unworthy to be called his son? My malady would be incurable, if my Father had not become my Physician; but no disease is incurable to the Physician who is wise, good and all-powerful.

III. POINT.

If the greatest sinners should hope for all from the goodness of God, when they return to Him in the sincerity of a broken heart, how much more should the just who endeavor to serve Him constantly, be strengthened in humble confidence, without being discouraged by their weakness and their falls! If God assures us that He forgets the iniquity of the sinner as soon as he groans over it and does penance (Ez. XVIII, 22), will He refuse to hear the sighs of those who love Him, and who weep sincerely over their least faults? Let them never lose confidence, for which God reserves a great reward (Heb. X, 35). This confidence is inseparable from faith, which shows God to us equally good and powerful to be able and to will to do us good. "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Mat. VIII, 26), said Jesus to His apostles, who trembled during the tempest. If you find nothing but what is weak and contemptible in yourself, consider the almighty power and mercy of God; see how He esteems your soul, judge how He values it, by the precious Blood by which He has redeemed it, with which He nourishes and strengthens it every day at the altar.

Friday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Greatness of the boon of the forgiveness of sins.

I. POINT.

"Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Mat. IX, 2).

The remission of sins is a signal favor of the goodness of God, and a great benefit, which men cannot sufficiently prize. It was the motive as well as the fruit of the labors, the sufferings and the death of Jesus Christ. St. Paul says: "Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. I, 15). The salvation of a single man, of myself individually, was a sufficient motive for His coming; for Jesus Christ died for each individual as well as for all men. Therefore the same apostle declares boldly: "The Son of God loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. II, 20). And we should repeat it after him: He loved us and died for us, He gives us His Blood as freely as if it had been shed only for us; His merits as abundantly as if they were to be applied only to us. O goodness, too lovable! O boundless charity, immense, infinite, incomprehensible!

II. POINT.

Sin is measured by the dignity of Him who is offended, and the satisfaction for it must be proportionate. Sin committed against a God, infinite in greatness, in holiness, in goodness, has a malice which may be called infinite, and, as such, cannot be repaired either by angels or by men, though, to make satisfaction, they should labor and sigh and suffer throughout eternity: thus the pains of the damned, because they are cut off from the body of Jesus Christ, from union with Him, from a participation in His merits, will never end, because, however great, they will never have the power to efface a single sin. Sin could be destroyed

only by the sufferings and death of a God. O Jesus, crucify with Thyself the man of sin in me! May I suffer and die efficaciously with Thee, that I may not suffer and die eternally, and may not be separated from Thee forever!

III. POINT.

With the remission of sins, the soul receives anew grace, virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost: it is restored to favor with God; it recovers His friendship; it regains its rights to the merits of the Saviour; it is re-established in the adoption of the children of God; and in this character, it becomes an heir of heaven and co-heir with Jesus Christ: such are the marvellous effects of the power of the Man-God to remit sins; and, what is more admirable, is that He has left perpetually to His Church the power to forgive sins, and thus this benefit is daily renewed. O Jesus, Source of grace and life, which can never be dried up or exhausted; for we cannot commit crimes so numerous and so enormous, that the priests have not the power to remit them. O Jesus, what can we render to Thee for this remedy so salutary, so efficacious and, at the same time, so easy, which Thou hast given to us in the institution of the sacrament of penance, so necessary to salvation.

Saturday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Confidence in God.

I. POINT.

“They brought to Him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed.”
(Mat. IX, 2.)

This is a picture of the fatal state of a man guilty of mortal sin. The body of a paralytic is as if dead; he cannot help himself or attend to his ordinary duties. The soul of the sinner, reduced to a more grievous ex-

tremity, is truly dead before God, although it seems to be alive. It acts physically, it is true, but it is absolutely helpless in all that regards salvation; it is impotent and paralytic for supernatural good works, utterly incapable of performing even the least; it cannot merit, or advance a single step towards heaven. All its interior faculties are without movement for good; and to crown its misfortune, it takes pleasure in its misery and "loves darkness rather than the light" (John III, 19). Who can cure such a malady, if not He who said: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live" (John XI, 25). He makes the dead hear His voice, that they may live and see the light once more. Therefore, "if to-day you hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. XCIV, 8).

II. POINT.

"Son, be of good heart" (Mat. IX, 2). Humility is a virtue which consists in acknowledging that God is all, and that we are nothing; and not to rely on ourselves, but on God alone, is confidence in God: a confidence which Jesus, the divine Physician, prescribes to the sick man as the only remedy that can heal him. In proportion as we see and feel our miseries, and this is already a grace, we ought to cast ourselves into the arms of God, knowing His power and goodness, and that He can and will deliver us. "Is My arm shortened", says our Lord, or is My power so much diminished, that I cannot redeem? Have I not strength enough to deliver them who hope in Me? "They that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength" (Is. XL, 31). St. Leo said: We can do all things in Him, without whom we can do nothing. Thus humility of heart begins conversion, and confidence in God perfects and completes it.

III. POINT.

“Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house” (Mat. IX, 6). Confidence renders humility a Christian virtue, not cringing or timid, but strong, generous, capable of the greatest undertakings. It raises us above ourselves, and makes us despise all that is pompous and dazzling in the world. It enables us to overcome the difficulties and obstacles that oppose virtue; to embrace with joy the labors and severities of penance; to bear without discouragement the contradictions, the trials, the afflictions of this life: it makes of all things steps and means to go to God, to reach the holy mountain, exclaiming with David: “How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.” Blessed are they whom Thou hast chosen and elected to dwell with Thee in Thy house, O Lord! “They shall praise Thee for ever and ever” (Ps. LXXXIII, 2).

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The Incarnation and the Blessed Eucharist.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a king.”

(Mat. XXII, 2.)

Jesus Christ proposes to us two parables, which represent two great mysteries. The wedding feast of a king’s son represents the mystery of the Incarnation; the great supper of the father of the family is a figure of the Holy Eucharist. Between the two mysteries there is a marvellous resemblance: in the former mystery the Son of God took our nature, “and became like unto us in all things, sin only excepted” (Heb. IV, 15). In the latter He unites Himself not only to our human nature, but to each one of us individually. The former

union is substantial, the latter is accidental; it is a union of spirit, of love and of grace: these two unions are the work of divine charity, and demand all our gratitude.

II. POINT.

In the Incarnation there are two natures, the divine and the human, but only one person—the divine Person of the Son of God. In the Eucharist Jesus is found in various places at the same time; so that in the one, there is unity of person in the plurality of natures; in the other, unity of person in the multiplicity of the local presence. These two mysteries of the Incarnation and the Eucharist are accomplished by the power of the word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost: the former in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, by the consent which she gave, saying: “Be it done to me according to thy word” (Luke I, 38); the latter, on the altar, by the word of the priest: in the former Mary gave to the world a God made man, whom she bore in her arms, who allowed Himself to be governed by her; in the latter the priest holds in his hands this same God-man, who gave power to the priest to cause God to descend from heaven, to render Him present on the altar, without possibility of His being divided: in the former the divinity was hidden under the obscurity of a mortal body; in the latter Jesus is entirely veiled and hidden under the sacramental species; in both He is “truly a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour” (Is. XLV, 15), since He conceals Himself only to adapt Himself to our weakness, and to save us more efficaciously.

III. POINT.

The Eucharist is not only a lively expression of the mystery of the Incarnation; it is also an extension and an application of it, for it communicates to us its effects.

The Incarnation is the tree of life; the Eucharist is its fruit: the one is the source, the other the channel through which Jesus gives Himself to us, and applies to us His graces. The former mystery contains His great love for us; the second communicates it to us: in the former "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John III, 16); in the latter it is said that Jesus, "having loved His own, He loved them to the end" (John XIII, 1). The Incarnation was the effect of the immense charity of a God, and the Eucharist is the effect of the very ardent love of Jesus for us. O prodigy, O excessive goodness of God, incomprehensible to our minds, ineffable to our tongues, but which should be deeply felt in our hearts.

Monday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

The nuptial garment.

I. POINT.

"Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having on the wedding garment?" (Mat. XXII, 12.)

What is this garment, the want of which draws upon this man so sudden, so irrevocable a condemnation? Why is a friend suddenly treated as an enemy? This man is not accused of any crime; he comes where he is invited, but he is not clothed with the wedding garment; this is his only sin. Yet he is so confused, so overwhelmed, that he finds no words to defend himself. The Fathers say that this indispensable garment is charity, which makes us love God, seek His glory, do all to please and satisfy Him. Many deceive themselves, imagining that their salvation is secure, provided they do not fall into great sins, without thinking of fulfilling the first and greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord" (Deut. VI, 5). Yet St. Paul says:

“If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema” (1 Cor. XVI, 22); that is, let him be rejected by God like this man of the Gospel. Not to love God is a sufficient reason for a just condemnation.

II. POINT.

Charity, which is the garment of salvation, is not real, if it does not produce good works. St. John says: “Let us love in deed and in truth” (1 John III, 18); and St. Paul: Jesus Christ came to “cleanse to Himself a holy people, acceptable and given to good works” (Tit. II, 14). Good works are a proof of love, and the necessity of love is shown to us by the nuptial garment in the parable, which is its symbol; but this robe, to be beautiful, must be suitable to our condition. The king and the peasant, although very differently clothed, may be equally well dressed, each one according to his state: thus the effects of charity are different in the beginner, in the penitent, in him who labors for the salvation of souls, or who is himself perfected in the love and service of God. Perfection has various degrees. St. Bernard says: If you begin, begin well and perfectly; if you are more advanced, let the progress of your justice correspond to the number of graces which you have received.

III. POINT.

As a garment covers the whole body, so charity should cover the whole body of our life and our actions; it should render our conduct even and uniform, because it should be its soul and its source. We ought to love God at all times, for He *is* always; in all places, for He fills them all; in adversity and prosperity, for He directs both for our salvation, and causes all things to turn to the advantage of those who love Him (Rom. VIII, 28). This robe is a wedding garment, and should be beauti-

ful and well made, because the nuptials which begin here below, will be eternal; therefore, the Wise Man says: "At all times let thy garment be white" (Eccles. IX, 8). St. Hilary says: The nuptial robe is the whiteness of a heavenly and divine garment, the ornament of the whole man, which renders hearts and bodies pure. "Put on the new man", says St. Paul (Eph. IV, 24). And who is clothed with this new man, but he who ceases to love himself, in order to love only God!

Tuesday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Idleness and evil speech.

I. POINT.

"Give not place to the devil" (Eph. IV, 27).

St. Chrysostom says: At first the devil asks only for a very small entrance, knowing that afterwards it will be easy to insinuate himself, according to these words which he well knows: "He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater" (Luke XVI, 10). Many things give an entrance to this enemy. St. Paul exhorts us to avoid him by occupying ourselves with some useful work to relieve the poor (Eph. IV, 28). Idleness is the source of all evil; it makes us waste time, that time which is given to us to gain eternity, that time which is acquired for us by the blood of a God, that time which the damned who know its value, but too late to be able to profit thereby, would redeem with a thousand lives. We lose this precious time not only by being idle, and by letting it pass by unprofitably, but also by spending it in vain things, that serve only for pride or pleasure, an occupation truly unworthy of a Christian. St. Paul wishes our labor to be good and useful. Notwithstanding the multitude of his apostolic cares, he occupied himself in manual labor;

and this was the practice of the ancient anchorites, who supported so many poor by their industry. St. Francis de Sales says: Let us employ well the time given us by God, that He may be pleased to give us His eternity.

II. POINT.

“Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth; but that which is good to the edification of faith, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. IV, 29, 30). A single word may give the devil an entrance into our soul and our heart. Who would believe this, if St. Paul himself had not declared it? After that, who would speak lightly, who would not love silence, who would not keep his lips closed to every useless word, and thus close the door to an enemy so dangerous? An inordinate word does more, it displeases the Holy Ghost, as much as it delights the devil; it deprives us of many graces. Who will not exclaim with David: “Lord, set a watch before my mouth, and a door round about my lips, that all my words may be ordered by Thee” (Ps. CXL, 3).

III. POINT.

St. Paul wishing to show us that every word which wounds charity, grieves the Holy Ghost in a special manner, continues in these terms: “Let all bitterness, all anger, all murmuring, all slander be banished from among you” (Eph. IV, 31). Here is an enumeration of the different ways in which charity is violated, of the sources which produce too great liberty of speech, a liberty which often degenerates into true license. We criticise, we blame, we mock, and then we tell falsehoods, we slander, we often go so far as to be guilty of slander. To remedy all these evils, St. Paul condemns them in their source, he shows us their unhappy effects, and he adds: Have meekness and tender compassion

one for another, forgiving one another, as God has forgiven all through Jesus Christ our Lord. O my God, give me an understanding of these great and important maxims, and grace to follow them faithfully without ever straying away.

Wednesday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Dispositions requisite for the marriage-feast.

I. POINT.

“A king made a marriage for his son” (Mat. XXII, 2).

According to the Fathers this parable contains important instructions; on one side, it leads us to the knowledge and love of God, and on the other, to a holy dread, a salutary fear. By these two dispositions, which are called the two feet of the soul, we go to God, and we render homage to two of His principal attributes, His mercy and His justice, dreading the latter, that we may become worthy of the former. Moses said: “What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways, and love Him?” (Deut. X, 12). This is not the fear of slaves who dread only punishment; it is that of children, who fear to displease a father whom they love; therefore it is called the beginning and the crown of wisdom (Ps. CX, 10), a wisdom which is definite, a knowledge full of sweetness and love. This fear is inseparable from true love; its fruit is salvation; it fills the soul with peace, for he who fears God, dreads nothing (Eccli. XXXIV, 16). He is not frightened by anything, because he has put his hope in Him; finally, it expands the heart, and fills it with holy joy.

II. POINT.

God the Father is the King, who invites us to the marriage-feast of His Son; the graces and gifts of the

Holy Ghost are the precious viands which are prepared for this festival: our miseries, of whatever nature they may be, do not exclude us; for the Lord said: "Go into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage, both bad and good, and the marriage was filled with guests" (Mat. XXII, 9). We are all called, all are invited to the heavenly banquet; some reach it by the preservation of innocence, others by a prompt and sincere repentance. We are called to justice, to holiness, in order to merit grace, and grace is given to us that we may attain to glory, to the magnificent and divine Banquet in which God Himself will feast His elect (Apoc. VII, 16); there "they shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, O Lord, Thou wilt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure" (Ps. XXXV, 9). O how manifold are Thy mercies! I will sing Thy goodness forever, O God of my salvation (Ps. LXXXVIII, 1).

III. POINT.

The king, seeing a man who had not on a wedding garment, ordered him to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat. XXII, 13); for, adds Jesus, "many are called, but few are chosen". Who will not tremble at this terrible sentence? For upon what crime is it pronounced? This man had not on a wedding garment! But he had been found on the great highway; invited and urged to come to the banquet, he had neglected to put on the wedding garment offered him at his entrance. Charity, a robe infinitely precious, is so necessary, that it is never lawful to lay it aside in any place, at any time, or under any circumstances. Charity should adorn our soul; it should be so deeply rooted in our heart, that all the waves of temptation

should not be able to remove it: we ought to be always clothed with it, always bearing our lamps lighted, filled with the oil of good works, bright and burning with love, that we may be ready to set out at the moment when it shall be said to us: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him" (Mat. XXV, 6), lest the door be closed to us, as to the foolish virgins, and lest, having been called to the banquet, we should be judged unworthy of admittance and shamefully driven forth forever.

Thursday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Dispositions for holy Communion.

I. POINT.

"Friend, how camest thou hither, not having on the wedding garment?" (Mat. XXII, 12).

The sacred robe of the humanity of Jesus is His divinity, which not only covers and clothes it interiorly, but penetrates and fills it, sanctifying it and rendering it divine. The robe of the divinity is the humanity, with which it is exteriorly clothed, and under which it is hidden and covered, as the sun under a thick cloud. O mysterious, but precious and adorable garment of the holy humanity of Jesus, which hides the glory of His divinity, to give us free access to Him, and to render Him favorable, that we may in virtue and under the auspices of His holy humanity, "approach the throne of His grace with confidence" (Heb. IV, 16).

II. POINT.

When we are invited to the Banquet of the Blessed Eucharist, the first nuptial garment with which we should be clothed is grace and charity. Whoever dares to present himself in a state of mortal sin, deserves to hear from the lips of Jesus: "Friend, how camest thou

hither, not having on the wedding garment?", and "to be cast", without delay, "into exterior darkness". On this subject St. Paul says, that he who, at this table, eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself (1 Cor. XI, 27). The second garment is actual devotion, the adornment of virtue and holy perfection; and what care we should take to prepare our souls to receive the King of kings, who comes to us, His hands full of graces, to pour them into our hearts, in proportion as He finds them ready!

III. POINT.

The third nuptial garment, rich, holy, precious, worthy to draw upon us the eyes of God and His good will, is Jesus Himself, with whom we must be clothed, that we may receive Him worthily, according to the exhortation of the apostle: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. XIII, 14). Let us clothe ourselves with His merits, let us plunge our contrite and humbled hearts into the salutary bath of His Blood, in the sacrament which applies to us the virtue of both; let us clothe ourselves with His spirit, letting Him act freely and absolutely in us; with His maxims, believing them, revering them, practising them; with His virtues, imitating them. Come, O divine Jesus, come, accomplish in me these happy effects, clothe me with Thyself, transform me entirely into Thee by love and imitation, as it pleased Thee to promise to the great St. Augustine, saying to him, I shall not be changed into thee, but thou shalt be changed into Me.

Friday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Union in Jesus Christ between the divine nature and the human.

I. POINT.

"A king made a marriage for his son."

(Mat. XXII, 2.)

God the Father is this King who, in a mysterious and divine manner, made a wedding for His Son, when He sent Him into the world on the day of His Incarnation, the day on which His adorable Son united Himself to human nature by an ineffable alliance. But what inequality between these two parties, between the only Son of God, true God, born of God before all ages, infinite in His perfections, whose name is the Almighty, and human nature, whose first and most innocent origin is nothing, and whose second origin is Adam, a corrupt sinner, vitiated in all his faculties, marked with the infamous stain of sin! O God, so great, so pure, whose holiness makes the highest seraph tremble! What disproportion between Thee and such a spouse! A disproportion greater certainly and more astonishing than there was between king Assuerus and the humble Esther! But love formed these bonds. O Lord, what excessive love and charity for us made Thee descend from the throne of Thy greatness to our extreme lowliness.

II. POINT.

As in marriage the two parties are perfectly united together, as there is an entire communication between them of property, of titles and quality: so in Jesus there are two natures, the divine and the human; natures which, existing in one same person, form this admirable compound of love, Jesus Christ, our Lord, the Man-God. By this ineffable union there is a communication between the properties and the greatness of

the divinity and the lowness of our nature; so that we may say that the Man Jesus is the Creator of the world, that He is almighty, that He dwells from all eternity "in the bosom of the Father" (John I, 18); and, moreover, that Jesus, true God, was passible, mortal, subject to all the indignities of His Passion. O adorable abasement of the Supreme Majesty! O sublime and surprising elevation in Jesus of our nature, which is only clay and, as it were, nothing. We are no longer permitted to abase ourselves to earth, or to love any object but Him, who has done such great things in us and for us!

III. POINT.

Marriage produces a union and fellowship of life, which can be broken only by death; and the hypostatic union of the divine nature with the human nature in Jesus Christ is perpetual and indivisible, and so firm that death itself cannot destroy it. Jesus, who was, who is, and who will be eternally the Son of God, is and will be eternally the Son of man, and God annihilated in us and for us. O excessive charity, which makes Thee, O great God, bear this abasement forever!—an abasement in which we find our elevation and our greatness! To render homage to this marvelous union, may I be bound, attached and united to Thee, my Saviour, by bonds so strong, so indissoluble, of submission, dependence and love, that the whole world, even hell itself, may never be able to loosen or destroy them.

Saturday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

How to be renewed in spirit.

I. POINT.

"Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind."

(*Eph. IV, 23.*)

We are all born corrupted by sin. "Children of

wrath'' (Eph. II, 3), condemned to hell, the Spirit makes us revive again to attain the kingdom of God. This is granted to us by baptism, in which we are regenerated in the blood of Jesus Christ and re-established in innocence and justice; but because we are all weak and fragile, this innocence is often lost, even before we know its value. This justice is diminished and weakened; we need to be raised up and renewed, to grow and be strengthened in charity; for it is charity which renews men: as malice forms the old man, so charity forms the new man (St. Aug.). But charity will be perfect only in heaven; in that new land (Is. LXV, 17) we shall be entirely renewed; and we ought to aspire to it continually here below, washing away the stains of our life in the water of our tears, occupying ourselves with piety and holy reading, meditations, prayers and exercises of charity, watching and striving by all kinds of good works, to pass from the old man to the new; thus we shall constantly hasten the happy renewal of our heart.

II. POINT.

“Put on the new man” (Eph. IV, 24). By these words St. Paul explains to us, what is meant by the nuptial garment mentioned in the Gospel. After having exhorted us to a holy renewal, He teaches us also in what it consists, and in what it is made. Jesus Christ alone accomplishes it, and He makes in our souls this change, of which He gave us the figure in His risen body. To raise to life, or to renew souls, belongs only to Him who has the power to create them. We are renewed, when, by a second creation, the image of God is restored in us by Jesus Christ, who is called the New Man, because we find in Him a new holiness, a new justice, a new humility. The New Man draws us to Himself, according to His promise: “And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John XII, 32); and He renews us, when He engraves and imprints in us the features of His divine likeness. O Jesus, "draw me, and we will run after the odor of Thy perfumes" (Cant. I, 3) and to the imitation of Thy holy virtues.

III. POINT.

"Put ye on the new man who is created according to God, in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. IV, 24). This renewal is called a creation, because it is an effect of the pure mercy of God, a mercy which we have not merited, but to which we must correspond. Justice should direct or reform all our exterior actions, in what regards our neighbor, to enable us to fulfil our duty towards him, and to render to him what is his due. Holiness purifies the heart by love and attachment to God; truth rectifies the mind and guides the words. They who have received this grace of the new creation, who are clothed with the new man with the nuptial garment, should preserve it with great care, fearing lest sin, like a worm, should corrupt it, or like thorns, should tear it. Our Lord says: "Blessed is he, that keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Apoc. XVI, 15). But since Thou dost will my sanctification, O Lord, sanctify me Thyself; cover me with the mantle of innocence and the robe of charity, and preserve Thy gifts in me (St. Francis de Sales).

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

Lessons from the Gospel of the day.

I. POINT.

"Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe."
(John IV, 48.)

The reproach which Jesus here addresses to the Jews, should make us tremble, at least it should touch

us keenly; for if it does not regard us directly, it contains a reproach which too often applies to us. It is true, we no longer ask for miracles to confirm our faith, but by an ungrateful insensibility we accustom ourselves to the most striking miracles, we behold them with an indifferent eye, and although they are accomplished in our favor, though they are the work of the unchanging charity of God for us, we remain cold and languid near so great a fire. The divine and miraculous changes which take place upon our altars and contain a world of wonders, pass before us for our benefit, without changing us, without softening our hearts. Yet what could be stronger, or more powerful to awaken our faith, to inflame our love, to excite our fervor and make us run in the way of God and in the practice of good works? Let us blush for our infidelity.

II. POINT.

The prince mentioned in the Gospel is a figure of imperfect souls, who address themselves to Jesus, only to obtain temporal favors, who do not seek Him through a true and sincere love, but with an interested love, or through a servile and mercenary fear: scarcely any one is found who seeks Jesus for Himself alone; we do not think of Him, unless we are crushed by some affliction; we forget Him in prosperity, as if it were not a gift from His hand; we attach ourselves more to the gift than to the Giver, and we thus slumber in the love of present things, unless a salutary adversity comes to arouse us from our lethargy and compel us, as it were, to have recourse to Him. O Jesus, my physician and my remedy, my consolation and my strength, my support and my only treasure! I love Thee, O Lord, not only because Thou art all this to me, but because Thou alone art worthy to be loved; without Thee all pleasures are

bitter; without Thee the most abundant riches are for me an unsupportable poverty (St. Aug.).

III. POINT.

“Lord, come down before that my son die” (John IV, 49). We ought constantly to beseech God to preserve us from sin, which is the true death of the soul, a death infinitely more sad than that of the body. The grace of preservation from sin is the first of all; it has been granted to many saints who have preserved their innocence in its integrity; but, above all, the holy Mother of God was adorned with it in a special manner, incommunicable to any one else. The physician who heals, shows the excellence of his art better than one who preserves (St. Francis de Sales); but the benefit which we receive from the latter, is greater and more advantageous. O come, Lord, before my soul dies! Come and preserve it from death. If it has already lost the innocence and justice which it received from Thee, vouchsafe to restore them, and strengthen me in such a manner that I may never more lose them; if Thou hast restored my life, perhaps a million times, let me not lose it again, let me never more abuse Thy graces. Lord, bend down to me; come, strengthen and sustain me by that divine preservative, the bread of life, the food of immortality, which Thou hast prepared for us, O my God, in the abundance of Thy sweetness (Ps. LXVII, 11).

Monday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

Why and how we should believe.

I. POINT.

“Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”
(John IV, 48.)

God is the object of our faith, and the reason why we ought to believe, is also God Himself, because He

is the first truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Therefore Jesus reproves this man, and in him the Jews and all who wish to be too wise in regard to the mysteries of faith, and desire to see wonders before believing; for they found their faith on reason or appearances. We ought to believe simply on the word of Jesus, because He speaks, and not chiefly because of His miracles, which serve only to prove his authority and to make His mysteries more easy to believe, for truth alone should suffice to convince and subject our minds. O supreme and eternal Truth, speak to my heart, it is ready to listen to Thee, to believe Thee, to obey Thee.

II. POINT.

St. Paul thus mentions the first source of faith: "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is" (Heb. XI, 6). This is the principal end and the great reason of our faith: God alone is absolutely (Ex. III, 4), that is, exists by His own essence; He possesses the fulness of being. All His infinite divine perfections are comprised in His Being. We ought to believe in Him who is, to hope in Him, to love Him, to render Him our homage and all the honor which is due to His supreme greatness. The three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity, as also the virtue of religion, regard God in Himself and not in His creatures. Faith beholds Him as Truth; hope, as the only Good; charity, as essential Goodness, and religion as supreme Greatness: thus we believe and hope in Him, we love Him and honor Him, because of what He is in Himself, and for His own sake. O Jesus, imprint in our hearts this pure and worthy motive for loving Thee; grant us grace to seek Thee and love Thee purely and simply for Thyself alone.

III. POINT.

In the school of Jesus let us learn to believe, and not to know; not to penetrate mysteries curiously, but to revere them humbly; not to pass for learned, but to become humble disciples, submissive and docile to His light; not to try rashly to fathom divine truths and dogmas of faith, but to "live by faith" (Hab. II, 4), according as it is written of the just man; that is, to follow the maxims of faith, to act by its principles, to be guided according to its rules, to imitate Him in whom we believe, Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith", who instead of the joy that was set before Him, chose the Cross, and who, in recompense for the contempt and ignominies which He endured, "is now seated at the right hand of God" (Heb. XII, 2). O Jesus, give me an humble faith, living by charity, active by good works, a faith which will make me suffer with Thee, that I may one day reign with Thee.

Tuesday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.**Need of circumspection.**

I. POINT.

"Walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise."

(Eph. V, 15.)

St. Paul had already said: "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord; walk, then, as children of the light" (Eph. V, 8). If God has given you grace to enlighten you, if He has touched your heart, if He has delivered you from sin, if He has broken the bonds which held you captive under the yoke of the devil, the world and your passions, watch for the preservation of the gifts which you have received: be vigilant, attentive, circumspect: "Walk while you have the light" (John XII, 35); follow it,

lest, by neglecting it, you relapse into your former darkness, and adding to your past faults ingratitude and a renewed abuse of the pardon that has been granted you, and of the graces you have received, you see yourself in a state worse than the first (Luke XI, 26), as Jesus warns you in the Gospel.

II. POINT.

To walk securely, to retrieve false steps and to avoid dangers, we must not walk without light; for "he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth" (John XII, 35). But Jesus is "the true light, that enlighteneth every man coming into the world" (John I, 9), as He Himself said: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but he shall have the light of life" (John VIII, 12). Following this divine torch, we cannot go astray, nor can we lose sight of it, without losing ourselves. He enlightens us exteriorly by His word, by His holy truths, taught in the Gospel, and explained by the Church; He enlightens us interiorly by His interior grace, which shows us the true good, excites us to follow it, animates us to embrace it, by the motions and the light of His Spirit, of whom it is said: "His unction teacheth you of all things, and is truth" (1 John II, 27). O divine and eternal light, grant that I may adhere to Thy Spirit, that I may abandon myself to His guidance; that I may look upon Thee and follow Thee always, O Lord, by a faithful imitation and constant obedience.

III. POINT.

Finally, a wise circumspection makes us attentive to distinguish the motions of grace in us from those of nature. The latter, agreeing with our inclinations, often deceives us, and makes us prefer, under vain pre-

texts, the desires of our passions and our self-love to those which God inspires. David complained of this: They have laid snares for me by the way, to make me fall (Ps. CXXI, 4); and Jesus, to enable us to avoid them, warns us to beware, lest the light that is in us be only darkness (Mat. VI, 23). To avoid illusion, it is important not to follow self, but to attach ourselves to God, through those who guide us in His stead, laboring to combat and conquer ourselves, to subdue our passions unceasingly; for the crown will be given only to the victorious. Our Lord says: "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me on My throne" (Apoc. III, 21).

Wednesday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

God draws good out of evil.

I. POINT.

"Jesus saith to him: Go, thy son liveth."

(*John IV, 50.*)

The words of Jesus "are spirit and life" (John VI, 64); they give the spirit of grace and holiness to sinners, preserve life, and restore it to those who are dead; these are the two effects which appear in the striking miracle related in Sunday's Gospel. For the ruler's son, who is so near death, is restored to perfect health at the word of Jesus, and the father believes in Him. Thus the works of Jesus tended always to the conversion and justification of souls, by the cure or the restoration to life of the body—a cure, a restoration, which ought to be asked and desired only for such an end. Jesus gave more than was asked, since to the temporal favor He added a spiritual grace far more important. O Jesus, make me hear Thy powerful voice, which restores life to the dead; speak, that my soul may live, and that it may live henceforth for Thee alone.

II. POINT.

“Go, thy son liveth.” Here Jesus speaks, and the thing is done; there the servants come to meet the father, to announce to him that his son is well: thus the effect follows the word in the justification of souls, for the priest has no sooner said: “I absolve thee”, than grace is restored and sins are pardoned: the tears of the penitent soul and the mercy of Jesus unite together without any interval. The father believes with his whole house. It is the duty of a father, of a master, of a superior, to guide to Jesus, by his word and still more by his example, all those who belong to him, to attach them to himself, to make himself feared and loved, only to lead them more efficaciously to Him; to use his power and authority only for the interest and glory of Jesus.

III. POINT.

“Himself believed, and his whole house” (John IV, 53). O happy illness which produces such salutary effects for faith and the knowledge of Jesus! Happy affliction, consoling misfortune, which elevates us to Jesus Christ, detaching us from all else; which gives us to Him, snatching us from the world, tearing us from ourselves! O goodness of God, which shines forth even in the chastisements with which He punishes our sins! For He renders them useful for our salvation. Let us bear them patiently; let us make use of them for the glory of Him, who abases us, only to glorify us, who humbles us, only to exalt us; who makes us fall under the malice of our enemies, only to place under our feet enemies much more dangerous, and to be Himself our sovereign Friend; finally, who takes away from us what we hold most dear, that He may Himself be our all. On these occasions He says to us, as Eleana said

to his wife: "Why weepest thou, am I not better to thee than ten sons?" (1 Kings I, 8). St. Augustine says, that he is too covetous, to whom God is not sufficient. If we possess Him, what can be wanting to us?

Thursday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

Appeal to God for help.

I. POINT.

"Lord, come down before that my son die."

(John IV, 49.)

Jesus, absent or present, can restore health and life; for all things are equally possible to Him, and the greatest miracles cost Him only a simple act of His will. He makes the dead hear His voice as well as the living; He is obeyed by inanimate beings as by rational creatures, He does with them whatever He pleases. Everything is subject to His absolute dominion, and who can resist Him? (Esther XIII, 9). "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps" (Ps. CXXXIV, 6). His will is always good and supremely equitable. O Lord, use Thy sovereign power in my favor; subject to Thyself all the faculties of my soul and my heart, subdue my rebellious will, bind it with Thy chains, O Lord, and do with me and by me according to Thy good pleasure.

II. POINT.

"Come down, Lord, before that my son die" (John IV, 49). We ought to pray to Jesus to come down to us before we die; that is, we ought to implore Him to assist us in rendering ourselves worthy of His grace, in doing penance, laying up treasures of good works, receiving Him often as the Viaticum of our pilgrimage, that He may preside at our death, and that, as Moses died by an express command of the Lord (Deut.

XXXIV, 5), or according to another version, in the kiss of the Lord, we too may die in the kiss of Jesus, that is, in actual union with Him, as in an act of His most holy love. O Jesus, come down before I die, complete Thy graces in me, grant that I may correspond with them, and that, at my last moment, I may have perfectly accomplished all Thy designs.

III. POINT.

“Come down, Lord, before that my son die.” All nature had this longing and used this language: “Come down, Lord” (Ps. CXLIII, 5), and make no delay. Nature was sick and languid unto death, sighing for its physician, calling for its deliverer; and the ancient just, groaning under the weight of sin, exclaim unceasingly: O God! come to our aid, “make haste to help us” (Ps. LXIX, 2). “Arise, O God, and help us” (Ps. XLIII, 26). “Bow down Thy heavens, O Lord, and descend” (CXLIII, 5). Thus we ought to desire Jesus, and when we feel the weight of the interior miseries which overwhelm us, the passions that oppress us, the temptations that beset us, we should say with Job: O Lord, why hast Thou made me contrary to Thee and a heavy burden to myself? (Job VII, 20). Deliver me, place me near Thee (Job XVII, 3); for what can I hope for, O Lord, but Thee? With David let us sing: “Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered” (Ps. LXVII, 2). Come, Lord, for in Thee and by Thee alone can I overcome them.

Friday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

“Redeem the time.”

I POINT.

“Redeem the time, because the days are evil.”

(Eph. V, 16.)

Time is given us by God to acquire eternity. The shortest of the moments which compose it, has an in-

finite value, because there is not one with which we may not purchase heaven; there is not one which, if worthily employed, may not merit for us an eternal reward. What treasures would we not amass, if we knew how to save all these precious moments, if we esteemed them at their just value! Yet how we lavish them every day in things profane, vain, useless, and even criminal? Why do we accumulate on our heads treasures of wrath? (Rom. II, 5). Why do we draw upon ourselves almost as many punishments as there are moments in our life? But the last moment will come, and we know neither the day nor the hour. Let us do now what we will then wish to have done.

II. POINT.

According to St. Augustine, to redeem the time is to consent to lose something, in order to be delivered from the anxieties and perplexities of this present life. If any one brings a suit against you, or disputes about your property: lose, give up something, that you may remain free to attend to the service of God; be not over-solicitous about the temporal inheritance, that you may not risk that which is eternal; do not lose time in games, in trifles and childish amusements, for thus Scripture styles the affairs which in the world are considered the most important. Alas! the time which you employ in these frivolities, is a time which is escaping from you, a time, the fruits of which you will reap eternally, according as you have employed it, well or ill. Make haste to do good, while you have the time (Gal. VI, 10), because a time will come, and it is approaching every moment, when you will no longer be able to do anything.

III. POINT.

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The time of this life is evil; it is full of miseries, of

trials and afflictions. "The life of man on earth is a warfare" (Job VII, 1); but "all things work together unto good to them that love God" (Rom. VIII, 28), and secure for the blessed, days of unending happiness. Time is truly evil, when spent in sin; we ought to shed tears over such ill-spent time and say with St. Augustine: Woe to the time, in which I did not love Thee, O my God! This time should be redeemed at the cost of our life; but, at least, let us redeem it by sincere repentance, by the labor and tears of penance; let us bewail the time which we have lost in forgetfulness of God (St. Gregory); let us redeem it as far as we can, by consecrating to the pure love of God all the moments that remain to us, without the least reservation.

Saturday after the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

Choice of a state of life.

I. POINT.

"Become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God." (Eph. V, 17.)

The first foundation of salvation is to be where God wishes us, to correspond to our vocation, to the attractions of grace, when we are to choose a state, an employment, a condition of life. How few apply themselves to ascertain that to which God calls them, what is His will in their regard. Of this He complains by His prophets: "Woe to you, apostate children, that you would take counsel, and not of Me" (Is. XXX, 1). I have not sent them, yet they ran (Jer. XXIII, 21). Can we then wonder that, having thus strayed from God, from the way that leads to Him, to follow self, to satisfy our passions, our own inclinations, we lose ourselves, we fall from error into error? David said to God: "All they that go far from Thee shall perish"

(Ps. LXXII, 27). Thou wilt destroy all adulterous souls who separate from Thee. How dangerous it is to be where God does not wish us, and not to be where He wills us to be!

II. POINT.

If we are settled in a state of life, whether we are there by the choice of God, or by our own, it is certainly His will that we should fulfil its duties, that we should live in conformity to what it demands. If God has placed us there Himself, it is a great consolation and a powerful motive to expect all from His assistance, to hope that He will complete what He has begun in us; for His works are perfect (Dan. III, 27). If, on the contrary, the Lord has had no part in our engagement, if we have not consulted Him in so important a matter, let us endeavor to repair our first fault by penance, and by a renewal of fervor and attention to seek Him in whatever state we may now be; to glorify Him by a faithful accomplishment of all that He demands of us, by the practice of the virtues it requires, by humble patience and perfect resignation in the trials that we meet with.

III. POINT.

We ought also to regard and love the will of God in all the accidents and different events of life. It is easy to conform ourselves to them, when they are favorable to our inclinations, but it is to be feared that then we love only self, while we imagine that we love only God. In cheerful submission to afflictions and trials, as there is nothing lovable in them, but the supreme will which ordains them, true love is recognized (St. Francis de Sales). Following the counsel of the apostle, let us seek sincerely in everything, not what pleases us, but what pleases God; not the accomplish-

ment of our desires, but the adorable will of the Most High. "Good things and evils, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Eccli. XI, 14). Let us be equally ready and disposed for all His different dispensations, and let us desire only what can contribute most to His glory.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

How to pay our debts to God.

I. POINT.

"Have a little patience with me, and I will pay Thee all."
(Mat. XVIII, 26.)

Having nothing, and being unable to do anything of ourselves, what would become of us, if we had not an ever present resource in the mercies of Jesus Christ our Lord? Let us have recourse to the infinite merits acquired for us by His Passion, His sufferings and death: let us find therein the price of our ransom and the merit of our penance, by the various means which He gives us, and, above all, through the divine sacraments which He instituted to apply to us their efficacy and virtue; let us approach them frequently with faith, love and gratitude. O Jesus, I should be insolvent if Thou wouldst not pay for me. O Lord, let me draw from Thy treasures; give me some drops of Thy precious blood, of which a single one is sufficient to wash away and efface all the sins of the world, to satisfy Thy justice and merit for us all Thy graces.

II. POINT.

"The lord of that servant, being moved with pity, forgave him the debt" (Mat. XVIII, 27). Whatever we give to God, we have previously received from Him; we give Him only His own gifts; we can pay Him only with the coin which He gives us. We hold all from

Him, and we ourselves belong to Him. If He should treat us according to the rigor of His justice, and should not have pity on our misery; if He should not liberally forgive our debt, we should be cast into hell, from which we should never go forth. Because in that place of horror and darkness no merit is found, no redemption and no payment can be made, for there the sufferings shall last throughout eternity. The satisfaction which God demands of us in this life, is easy, light, meritorious and sanctifying: that which He demands in the other life, even in purgatory, is without merit, long and severe. Therefore let us come before the face of our Judge in confession (Ps. XCIV, 2), in sorrow, and by an efficacious and salutary penance.

III. POINT.

It is especially by means of the august Mystery of the Altar, that we can render to God all that we owe Him; therein we offer God Himself to God, and the eternal Son to the Father; there we present to Him that holy, immaculate Victim of inestimable value, in compensation for all His benefits, which are numberless and priceless, as also in expiation of the countless sins, which we have committed against Him. O admirable invention! O liberality of the goodness of God, who gives Himself to us in this Sacrament, that, offering Him to Himself, we may fully repay Him; for He has given us nothing greater, and we can offer Him nothing more worthy than Himself. Let us say to Jesus with humble boldness: O Lord, I am infinitely indebted to Thee in every way; "but have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all". Wait till I go to the altar, there I will offer Thee to Thyself and to Thy adorable Father; then I shall make satisfaction for all that I owe Thee, I shall discharge all my debt, "I shall pay Thee all".

Monday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

Punishment of the uncharitable.

I. POINT.

The servant, having obtained the remission of his immense debt, used violence to compel his fellow-servant to pay him the paltry sum he owed him. The lord, hearing this, was angry at his uncharitableness and injustice, and delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. There are two things which render the sinner unworthy of divine mercy. The first is ingratitude towards God, the greatest of benefactors. Ingratitude is a stain so black, that it seems to revive all the guilt of past sins, not that these sins revive in themselves, for God pardons us and bestows His favors without regret, and sins once effaced return no more; but as ingratitude adds a malice, a grievousness, an unworthiness to succeeding sins, it draws upon them a twofold chastisement. This we see in the severe punishment of the ungrateful and perfidious servant, who, rendering evil for good, and using cruelty towards one of his fellow-servants, abused the favor of his lord, and drew upon himself his indignation. This is the figure of the conduct of God, who always regards as done to Himself, what is done to the least of His children.

II. POINT.

Severity towards our neighbor seems to revive all past sins, and to oblige God to withdraw His indulgence, for "God is not mocked" (Gal. VI, 7). Though He should Himself assure us, as He did the servant mentioned in the Gospel, that He had forgiven all our debts; though He should say to us by one of His faithful prophets, as He did to David: "The Lord hath taken away thy sin" (2 Kings XII, 13); though, according

to the expression of David, He had removed our sins from us as far as the East is from the West, and as heaven from earth (Ps. CII, 12): the hardheartedness which causes us to hate and despise those whom He regards as His children, which leads us to do or wish them evil, while He orders us to love them, arouses His former wrath, recalls our sins, withdraws His goodness and love from us, dries up all the streams of mercy flowing from the divine source, to prevent their flowing upon us, and compels Him to deliver us into hands as pitiless as our heart (St. Bernard). This should make all those tremble, who keep in their heart any ill-will or hatred against their neighbor: for they shall be treated as they have treated others.

III. POINT.

“So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts” (Mat. XVIII, 35). Nothing is more irritating to God than the want of the charity He inculcates in so many ways; and it is principally on this point that the devil lays snares for us. He knows that without charity all the other virtues will perish; he willingly allows fasts, prayers, macerations of the body, provided he succeeds in destroying meekness, in sowing discord, envy, hatred; fatal dispositions which force God to withdraw His graces, to check the course of His mercies, to treat us, as He often declares in Holy Scripture, in the same manner as we treat others, for He assures us that He will judge without mercy him who has not shown mercy (James II, 13); and that the same measure that we have used with others, will be used with us again (Luke VI, 38). He will return love for love, and severity for severity. O Jesus, give me a heart meek, patient, charitable, kind, which alone will be the object of Thy goodness and clemency.

Tuesday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

Let us prepare our account with God.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a king, who would take an account of his servants” (Mat. XVIII, 23).

We come upon earth enveloped in thick darkness, which hides from us what we are. God, the immortal King of all ages, is indulgent, He bears with us patiently, He dissembles, He waits, that the sinner may have time to do penance (Wis. XI, 24); but an hour will come, and it is drawing nearer every day, in which we must enter into an account with Him (Rom. II, 16). St. Paul says: “We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ” (2 Cor. V, 10); we shall be summoned to His presence, as the servants mentioned in the Gospel, “to render an account of our stewardship”, of the use we have made of His goods and graces. He pours them upon us abundantly, from full hands, with a profusion worthy of His magnificence and goodness; it is our part to make them profitable, to acknowledge them, to correspond to His mercy, that we may not fall into the hands of His justice.

II. POINT.

The servant, when called as a debtor before his master, appears surprised and confused; he was living in peace and without scruple, at his master's expense, without thinking that he was accountable to him. Thus we often slumber in a rash security, flattering ourselves that we are just, relying on some passing motions or acts of piety! But St. Bernard says: I do not stop at this apparent justice; I fear God, I dread His light, and I also desire it now, that it may reveal to me the immensity of my debts, while I can still make satisfac-

tion, and while God shows His patience to me. Let Him now call me to render an account, let Him judge me now, let Him reprove me now, before the day comes which will be the limit of His patience, the day on which He will have no more mercy, and His judgment will be without appeal.

III. POINT.

St. Paul says: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" by God (1 Cor. XI, 31). Let us summon ourselves to the tribunal of our own conscience; let us examine ourselves with care, and sincerely judge ourselves, condemning ourselves severely, as the saints did. St. Bernard said: I ought to fear everything; the good almost as much as the evil, because I often mistake cockle for good grain, and chaff for wheat. I will then examine my heart and scrutinize all my ways, that He, who shall come to visit, not the Babylon of the world, but Jerusalem, who will examine it by the light of His lamps (Soph. I, 12), and who will judge even justice (Ps. LXXIV, 3), may not find in me anything which has not been already examined, judged, punished and atoned for. Who will give me the grace to discover and penetrate now the great number of debts I owe to my God, that, endeavoring to satisfy for them, I may not have to fear His piercing eye which nothing can escape (Heb. IV, 13). O Jesus, "enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Ps. XII, 4).

Wednesday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

How we should repent.

I. POINT.

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

(Mat. XVIII, 29.)

In these words the sinner finds the model of what he ought to do, when God has unsealed his eyes to

recognize his iniquity, to perceive the enormity of his faults and feel their weight; nothing remains for him, but to throw himself at His feet, to make an humble confession of his debts, to have recourse to His goodness, conjuring Him to have patience with him, and sincerely to promise to pay Him all. What does all this represent, if not the confusion, the profound humiliation of a contrite spirit, of a heart moved and penetrated with sorrow at the sight of its offences, full of a sincere determination and a generous resolution to expiate them, but, at the same time, animated with confidence and hope in the mercy of Him, upon whom it relies, and whose infinite goodness far surpasses its iniquity.

II. POINT.

The sinner thus moved, filled with horror for his faults, looking seriously at the rigid account which will be demanded of him, esteems himself happy to find in the most laborious exercises of penance the means to make satisfaction; nothing seems to him too severe. The more difficulties the penance presents to be overcome, the more the trials to be endured, the more the humiliations to be borne: the more pleasing and suitable it seems, and the more joyfully he embraces it. Always eager to suffer more, he counts as nothing what he has already done; he fears and hopes, saying humbly with David: Perhaps the Lord will accept my sacrifice, and will forgive my sin (2 Kings XVI, 12). He does not hesitate to ground his confidence upon this happy chance, and with this *perhaps*, so reasonable, he endures all, he exposes himself and submits to all; he knows that all who seek Thee and hope in Thee, O my God, shall never be confounded (Ps. IX, 11).

III. POINT.

The penitent sinner, persuaded that all that he can do is very little to appease the divine justice, desires ardently that God Himself should take the matter into His own hands, and assist him by sending him afflictions, which, not being his choice nor according to his taste, will be more apt to humble him and expiate his offences. He holds himself always ready to receive them; He waits for them with an humble and tranquil heart, and, far from complaining when they come, he receives them with joy, like St. Andrew: O good Cross, O affliction which I have so long desired, and which God at last grants to my longing! Such were the dispositions of the greatest saints, of the most celebrated penitents: thus David weeps over his sin; every night he washes his bed with his tears; he prays, he laments, he covers himself with sackcloth (Ps. VI, 7); but this is not yet enough; the thought of the immensity of his debts makes him seek every means to discharge them. Above all he uses, in an admirable manner, those which God sends him; he seems to say in the most trying events of his life: "Have patience with me", O Lord, "and I will pay Thee all" that I owe. In this intention, overwhelmed by the bloody outrages of one of his subjects, he said: "Let him alone, . . . for the Lord hath bid him curse David" (2 Kings XVI, 10). Let us think thus of those who oppress us, let us say with Jesus: "They know not what they do" (Luke XXIII, 34); but God, whom I have offended, knows well what He does through them. O Lord, who dost chastise those whom Thou dost adopt for Thy children (Heb. XII, 6), "I am ready to receive Thy scourges" (Ps. XXXVII, 18); cut, smite, afflict me in this life, provided Thou dost pardon me in the next (St. Aug.).

Thursday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

The pardon of injuries.

I. POINT.

“Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?” (Mat. XVIII, 32.)

We are all infinitely indebted to God; for we every day fall into many faults, and we have continual need of His clemency; but we irritate His clemency and change it into a just wrath, if, forgetful of the pardon that we have received and full of ingratitude, we refuse to forgive our brethren; and if we treat them only with a pitiless severity, we shall force a Father, full of affection and justice, to become our severe and inexorable judge. Therefore, let us pardon, and let us never be weary of pardoning; for Jesus Christ sets no limits to the obligation which He imposes upon us, to forgive our brethren who have offended us. He says: Forgive them, “I say not to thee till seven times, but till seventy times seven times” (Mat. XVIII, 22); that is, forgive them without growing weary; and He offers a powerful motive: “Forgive, . . . that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins” (Mark XI, 25). O Jesus, who, not satisfied with pardoning me, dost constantly load me with new favors, dost come to meet me in Thy adorable Sacrament, and there give me the kiss of peace, and fill me with joy by Thy chaste embraces, how should not my heart be softened by Thy sweetness? O my God, for love of Thee may I forget all, may I pardon all, may I find my pleasure in serving, in obliging, not only my friends, but even my mortal enemies.

II. POINT.

The mercy of God to us should be the model of our mercy to our neighbor. God wishes that in this, above all things, we should strive to imitate Him. Jesus said: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." He "maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (Mat. V, 45). In this we ought to be like unto Him. After His example, we ought to pardon all, to do good to all, even to our most bitter enemies. Our Saviour adds: By this all men shall know that you are the true children of your Father who is in heaven. St. Paul often repeats: "Bear ye one another's burdens; be patient towards all. Forgive one another as the Lord hath forgiven you" (Col. III, 13). O Jesus, how shall I dare to implore Thy clemency, if I, an unworthy sinner, with a heart full of bitterness towards my brother, refuse to pardon him?

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ teaches us, and the Church after Him directs us to address to God many times during the day this prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us" (Mat. VI, 12). Such is the condition of pardon, "forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (Mark XI, 25); and we acknowledge this ourselves, saying: Forgive us as we forgive (Luke VI, 37). We decide our own fate, we render favorable or unfavorable the sentence which we expect from our Judge; we pronounce it with our own lips and by our works. Alas! who can think of this without trembling? What a number of condemnations we draw upon ourselves, when we nourish hatred, resentment, or even coldness towards our brethren! Thus we draw upon ourselves the hatred of God, the resentment of God, the

indifference of God. The prophet exclaims: "Who shall stand before the face of His cold", or His indifference? (Ps. CXLVII, 17).

Friday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ made ample satisfaction for us.

I. POINT.

"He had not wherewith to pay" (Mat. XVIII, 25).

The satisfaction required is measured by the quality of Him to whom it is due. Creatures, angelic or human, could not render to God what was due to Him, nor satisfy for even a single sin. No one was found worthy to open the Book of Eternal Life and break its seals: it was only "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David", who conquered (Apoc. V, 5), and made worthy satisfaction on the Cross, because, as God, He has an infinite dignity to merit, and, as man, He took upon Himself our debts; so that the satisfaction was made in the same nature in which the fault had been committed; He joined power with duty, payment with debt, treasures with indigence. O immense goodness of God, who, to redeem the slave, delivered up His own Son (Rom. VIII, 32). O charitable and marvelous union in Jesus of His greatness with our lowness, of His holiness with our sins!

II. POINT.

The mercy of God surpasses our miseries, and His clemency in pardoning exceeds our malice in sinning, for to efface sin, which is not infinite in itself or in its source, but only in reference to its object which is God, Jesus presents to His Father the merits of His actions, of His sufferings and death, merits infinite in value and dignity, both in the Source which produced them and

in the Subject who received them, both being divine; and although a single action of Jesus Christ our Lord would have been more than sufficient to save all sinners, He wished to act and suffer for them from the first moment of His life until His death, in order to render our "redemption abundant" (Ps. CXXIX, 7). O excessive love! By what love shall I correspond to a love so excellent and so inconceivable!

III. POINT.

"He had not wherewith to pay." If we are infinitely accountable to the justice of God for our sins, we are not less so to His mercy for the innumerable benefits that we have received. We cannot recognize them worthily, still less satisfy all the duties to which these benefits engage us; and "what have we, that we have not received" from His liberal hand? (1 Cor. IV, 7). Do we not hold from Him our being? He gave it to us, and He continues to give it to us every moment, by preserving it, for preservation is as a continual reproduction. How many gifts, how many favors are contained in this first benefit and its consequences! But, if we consider that of our redemption, must we not exclaim with St. Bernard: If I owe myself entirely to Thee, O my God, because Thou hast made me, what do I not owe Thee, for having re-made me, and re-made me in a manner so marvelous, so admirable, which cost Thee so dear? If I cannot repay the number of Thy gifts, how shall I acknowledge the ineffable gift which Thou hast bestowed on me in giving me Thyself!

Saturday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

Infinite malice of sin.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a king, who would take an account of his servants. . . . And one was brought to him, who owed him ten thousand talents.” (Mat. XVIII, 23.)

This great sum is a figure of the countless debts that we contract towards divine justice by sin. The number ten thousand expresses something which surpasses our thoughts, that is, the infinite malice of mortal sin, which stains the soul, wounds it cruelly in a thousand ways, and puts it to death, because it is a separation from God, and an infinite aversion for Him who is our happiness and our life, our only and sovereign Good. Sin separates us from Him, and makes us deserving of being deprived of Him forever: and the eternal privation of God is the very just punishment of sin, as the greatest, the most terrible, the most irreparable, the most dreadful of all misfortunes.

II. POINT.

Sin deprives the soul of a divine and supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace; and if, by an impossible supposition, God were not in the soul by His immensity, but only by the gift of His grace, He would entirely cease to be there as soon as sin is committed, for God and sin are incompatible; “for what fellowship is there between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial?” (2 Cor. VI, 14). God abhors sin wherever He finds it. He cannot endure it, and the holy Doctors assure us that it is not lawful to commit a single sin, even to save the whole world; and our Saviour says: “What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer

the loss of his own soul" (Mat. XVI, 26), and, at the same time, lose his God? O sin, to be supremely hated, and so much the more, as God is to be supremely loved.

III. POINT.

Although sin cannot do any harm to God in Himself, because God is impassible and not susceptible of injury, nevertheless it is so opposed to Him, that it destroys, as far as it can, the effects of His power, the rays of His wisdom, the emanations of His goodness, the images of His holiness, in a word, all His infinite perfections, so far as they are communicated to His creatures; and if the sinner could ascend higher and lift his pride even to God, he would destroy Him, and put himself in His place. David says: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Ps. XIII, 1); the Lord shall not see, the God of Jacob shall not hear. Theology teaches us that the sinner, in order to sin with impunity, would wish in his malice that there could be no God, or that God could be without knowledge, without power, without justice, like the false gods of the heathen. Therefore the sinner in sinning commits as great an evil, as if he really injured God, because, were it in his power, he would do so. How could such audacious malice, such iniquity, such immense debt of so many crimes, be expiated, except by the infinite and priceless merits of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ came to restore the divine image in our soul.

I. POINT.

"Whose image is this?" (Mat. XXII, 20).

In the creation God said: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness" (Gen. I, 26). The image of God is engraved in the essence and the natural

properties of our soul; and His likeness, which He has placed there, shines forth in the grace with which He adorns and clothes it. This grace is something divine and supernatural, which renders it like unto God, making it participate in His purity, His holiness and His other perfections; so that it is by participation, what God is by His essence, according to these words: "I have said, you are all gods, and sons of the Most High" (Ps. LXXXI, 6); and again: "We are made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. I, 4). Such being the case, St. Paul reproached the Christians that they were still men, they who had been made divine in Jesus Christ. This glorious participation, this blessed resemblance begins on earth by the imitation of Jesus Christ, by our union with Him, and is consummated in heaven, where, St. Thomas says, the saints are perfectly conformed to God, and have in Him but one love and one will.

II. POINT.

St. Paul says: Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of men (Phil. II, 7), because man had first been made in the likeness of God. By sin man lost this resemblance, and Jesus came to restore it by His grace. The prophet says that, as the potter casts back into the mould the clay of a broken vessel, to form another vessel (Jer. XVIII, 4), so the Son of man came to remould us, if we may use the expression, and to renew His image. He presents the mould to us, He makes Himself like unto us, to be the model of our life and to make us like unto Him; and because resemblance is the cause or effect of love, He created us to His likeness, and He made Himself like unto us, to show how much He loves us and wishes to be loved by us; for this likeness in both cases is an effect of the excessive love of

God for us, and a powerful motive to induce us to love Him. Who would not be moved by it? Who would not feel its sweetness and its force?

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ is called "the image of the invisible God" (Col. I, 15), because He proceeds from God His Father, in the likeness of nature, and the Wise Man calls Him "the unspotted mirror of the majesty of God, and the image of His goodness" (Wis. VII, 26); divine qualities which we ought to adore, and the fruits of which we should reap. As Jesus is the image of His Father, and as He is in all things like unto Him, so we ought to be the living and perfect images of Jesus; we ought to bear His character and His likeness, to represent Him in our life, in our actions, in the practice of His holy virtues. This is the end and the perfection of the Christian's vocation, according to the sublime philosophy of St. Paul: "God hath predestined us to be made conformable to the likeness of His Son" (Rom. VIII, 29). O Jesus, come in Thy Sacrament, which is pre-eminently holy, imprint in me the image of Thy holiness, and grant that, after having so long borne the image of the earthly Adam, I may at length bear the likeness of the heavenly Adam (1 Cor. XV, 49).

Monday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

The soul, the image of God.

I. POINT.

"Whose image and superscription is this?"

(Mat. XXII, 20.)

The rational soul is the image of God, she represents Him in her being; for as God is a pure spirit, simple and immortal, containing in Himself all perfections, immense, present in all places, and one by His

essence; so the soul is a spiritual and immortal substance, adoring and imitating, in her own manner, the divine simplicity and perfection. O immortal God, who hast made my immortal soul to Thy image, to be eternally blessed in Thee and by Thee! Do not permit me to make myself eternally unhappy by straying away from Thee, the Source of life and immortality.

II. POINT.

God has imprinted His image in our souls. As He is in all places by His immensity without division, so the soul is entire in the whole body, and in each part of the body, without any division. God is the first moving spring and the source of life and operation in all nature; so the soul, dwelling in the body, communicates to it life, action and movement. Finally, as God commands the world, as "He spoke, and all things were made" (Ps. CXLVIII, 5), as He preserves it and rules it by His providence, so the soul exercises her empire over the body, which is subject to her. O sovereignty of God, represented in our souls, to which we ought to be subject! If it is a disorder when the body rebels against the soul, how much more disorderly, and hence how criminal, is the rebellion of the soul, resisting her God, and refusing to obey Him! O Jesus, supreme Source of the life of my body, come govern both body and soul; be the soul of my soul, correct and guide all my movements for Thy glory and my salvation.

III. POINT.

The soul bears the stamp of the divinity in her actions. God does all through His understanding and will. He performs two kinds of actions; some are immanent, that is, remaining within Him, as those of the divine processions; the others passing and exterior, outside of Him. He has given to the soul two spiritual

faculties, the will and the understanding. By these two faculties she acts within herself, thinking, reasoning with the one, and deciding with the other; afterwards she acts exteriorly through the senses and the organs of the body. God knows Himself, loves Himself and possesses Himself, and the soul is created by Him to know Him, to love Him, to see Him and to enjoy Him. O great God, Thou hast made us for Thyself; we shall never find repose but in Thee (St. Aug.). The immortal soul, made to Thy image, may indeed be occupied with created objects, but cannot be satisfied with them (St. Bernard), and all that is less than Thee, O my God, can never fill our immense capacity.

Tuesday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

Render to God the things that are God's.

I. POINT.

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mat. XXII, 21.)

It is a rule of justice which it is never lawful to infringe, to render to every one what is his due. Jesus Christ and His apostles instructed by Him, often teach us this: Pay tribute to whom tribute is due, honor and respect to those who deserve it (Rom. XIII, 7), submission and obedience to all who have authority over us. Yet how many Christians do just the contrary! Many practise charity, but refuse to do justice; they render to some what they do not owe, and they deny to others the assistance, the regard and a thousand other things which they do owe. We practise devotions of taste and inclination, and we neglect or give up those which our state, or our position requires of us. It is to such persons that the reproach of Jesus is addressed: "Why do you transgress the commandment of God, for your tradition?" (Mat. XV, 3).

II. POINT.

“Render to God the things that are God’s.” What is it to render to God that which is His? Does not everything belong to God? Would it not be better to say that we must give Him all? Without doubt we must give Him all, we must refer all to Him; for if we give something to creatures, as Jesus Himself orders, it is only to obey Him, it is only to fulfil the different duties which it has pleased Him to impose upon us in regard to them. The power of civil government, the authority of parents and superiors, are all derived from His power and authority, and He wishes to be served and obeyed in them. In paying tribute to Caesar, we pay it to God; we acknowledge His sovereign dominion, and render homage to Him. When we fear and respect those whom He has established over us, when we serve and love those whom He has made equal or inferior to us, it is He whom we should regard, and whom alone we should seek to please. We should do all with dependence on Him, and according to the limits and rules which He has prescribed.

III. POINT.

“Render to God the things that are God’s.” We so entirely owe all to God, that we owe to Him even the gratitude by which we render to Him what is His due. St. Augustine remarks, in an excellent manner, that only what belongs to God is worthy of Him. He says: Offer Him nothing that is of yourselves; and have you anything to offer Him but sin? This is a great subject of humiliation and confusion, that we have nothing in us that can please God, that is not a pure and gratuitous gift of His grace; that we are unable to offer Him anything which we have not received from Him! As Caesar demands his image, God demands of us His, and in

demanding it, He wishes to have us entirely, because the whole man is the image of God. We owe ourselves to Jesus Christ by a two-fold obligation, because, having created us to His image, He has a right over what He has made, and because, we ourselves having defaced this image by our sins, He has retraced it in us by His blood, restoring to us His grace and His spirit. Let us offer to Him, not the corruption of sin, which is not from Him, but justice and holiness, which He has given to us and restored to us by His merits.

Wednesday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

We should love the truth and be guided by it.

I. POINT.

“We know that Thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth.” (Mat. XXII, 16.)

To love the truth is to be sincere in our words and in our conduct; to love the truth is to love God, who said: “I am the truth” (John XIV, 6); to love the truth is to love everything in its order, and according to justice; it is to love virtue which, according to the definition of St. Augustine, is only well-regulated love. To love God more than self and above all, as infinitely lovable above all; to love our neighbor as ourselves, because he is equally capable of enjoying God; to consider the world and all creatures as being inferior and subject to us, using them only to advance towards God, only to glorify God, only to render us worthy to enjoy God: to live and love in this manner, is to love the truth. O Supreme and Eternal Truth, grant that I may love Thee, that I may seek Thee, that I may attach myself to Thee alone. “The wicked have told me fables; but not as Thy law” (Ps. CXVIII, 85), O Lord; it only is the truth and I will follow it.

II. POINT.

To love the truth is to attach ourselves to it, to follow it. Men, by a strange blindness, often abandon the truth; they despise real goods which would render them infinitely happy, to seek those which are false, imaginary and deceitful. "O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. IV, 3). Why do you pursue the lowest and last of all goods, as if they were the most excellent? (St. Augustine). Is not this vanity and falsehood? Why do you seek happiness so far beneath you? Your soul is immortal like God; it is capable of possessing Him; it makes you only a little lower than the angels; why do you degrade it to these shadows of goods, which pass away and, in passing, defile those who love them? Why do you take pleasure in darkness, you, whom Jesus Christ calls "Children of light"? (Luke XVI, 8). Walk in the light of the truth, attaching yourself to Him, who says: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John XIV, 6; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness" (John VIII, 12).

III. POINT.

"We know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God" (Mat. XXII, 16). What is this way, if not that which Jesus Christ traced for us in His life and in His virtues? Every other way is to be suspected; let us say more: every other way can lead only to death (St. Aug.). He only is truly Christian, who walks in the way in which Jesus Christ walked, and who will follow Him in His sufferings. This way, adds St. Augustine, appears hard; but it is the only one in which we can walk securely. Whatever men may say, beware of choosing any other. Whatever pleasures, whatever delights it may offer you, be not

deceived. Jesus teaches us that it is broad and spacious, and chosen by the greater number. It appears right to him who walks (Prov. XXI, 2), says the Book of Proverbs, but "it leadeth to destruction" (Mat. VII, 13). Endeavor, then, to enter by the low and narrow gate, into the strait and difficult way, which alone leads to life.

Thursday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

God alone is our end.

I. POINT.

"Whose image and superscription is this?"

(Mat. XXII, 20.)

We should often ask ourselves this question: Whose image do we bear? Is it not that of the devil, rather than that of God? It is true, God has engraved His divine likeness in our souls, but we have effaced it, or at least disfigured it by sin. Jesus Christ came to retrace this image in us, by numberless hardships, by His sufferings and death; for it cost Him His life, and yet we deface it anew to gratify our passions, for an infamous pleasure, a sordid interest, for a mere nothing, and that with an unworthy indifference to all that He has done and suffered to repair it. But, O my God, notwithstanding so base an ingratitude, Thy patience does not grow weary; Thou dost come to impress Thyself once more in our hearts through the Blessed Sacrament. O substantial and living image of the Father! O Lord, imprint upon us, according to Thy pleasure, all the features of Thy divine likeness; render us docile to Thy impressions; cause all Thy holy virtues to revive and shine in us.

II. POINT.

"Render to God the things that are God's" (Mat. XXII, 21). We belong to God, for His hands have

formed us for Himself. He could not create us for a more noble end; He could not destine us to a more blessed end than that of knowing Him, loving Him, serving Him, and enjoying Him eternally in His glory. In this He has made us equal to the angels and to Himself; for His happiness consists in knowing and loving Himself. How can we debase our desires and affections to earth, since we are made for God? We ought to live, to breathe, to act only for Him, only for the sublime end to which He calls us. Even our greatest and our most useful actions are unprofitable, if they do not tend to this end. All our trouble is in vain, if we labor for any other object. David, grieved because of the folly of men, who live as if they had no other end, no other happiness to hope for, than earthly goods, exclaims sorrowfully: "All men have become unprofitable together; there is none that doth good; no, not one" (Ps. LII, 4). Yet we see them all agitated by different cares, but alas! if it is not to acquire the only Good, the sovereign Good, for which they were born, they will find themselves at the moment of death empty-handed, saying in despair: "We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing" (Luke V, 5). We are full of corruption and emptiness; we have become abominable like the things that we have loved (Osee IX, 10).

III. POINT.

All that we are, and all that we have, belongs to God by so many titles; the tree and the fruit belong to Him in so many ways, that all that we turn aside from Him to give to creatures is a theft, which we commit against the Creator. All our actions, interior as well as exterior, if not directed to Him, if not done for Him, are not only contemptible, vain and useless, because they profit us nothing, but may even become sinful

and deserving of punishment, because they rob God of that which is incontestably His, to give it to the world. Thus, by a perfidious ingratitude, we turn against God His own gifts, by our abuse of them. This is an evil more common than we think, and for which we ought to grieve. O my God, Thou hast made me for Thyself, I am Thine, I wish to restore to Thee all that belongs to Thee, I wish to live henceforth only in Thee and for Thee!

Friday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

We belong wholly to God.

I. POINT.

“Render to God the things that are God’s.”

(Mat. XXII, 2.)

Our souls, our bodies and our lives belong to God by the right and title of creation. Does not the work, or its price, belong to the workman? Does he give the honor to any one? God, the Sovereign Creator, has made us, and we have not made ourselves (Ps. XCIX, 3); we are His, then, by creation. We are His also by preservation; we are always in His hand, and if He should cease to sustain us, we should be lost, we should fall back into our former nothingness. What more absolute dependence can there be! But the redemption, our regeneration in Jesus Christ, is an abyss which attracts another abyss: “Deep calleth upon deep” (Ps. XLI, 8); it is a first benefit which merits for us, which attracts to us an infinite number of others, both general and particular. Ah! Lord, who am I, and what have I done for Thee, that Thou hast bound me, attached me and engaged me to Thee by so many chains, by the strong chains of Thy benefits and Thy powerful love!

II. POINT.

Christ has two powers and two rights of sovereignty over us: the one as God and Lord of all things, under whose dominion we are essentially comprised, to whom we must be submissive; no creature can withdraw from His universal dominion. All must depend on Him, either by their own will, or by constraint: Blessed is he who willingly bears His yoke, which is light and easy! Blessed is he, who finds all his glory in obeying Him. He makes as many kings as He has faithful subjects; He goes even so far as to do the will of those who fear Him. Jesus Christ, as Man-God, our Saviour and Redeemer, has a new right of supreme dominion over us: We were already His by right of possession; He wished us to be His also by the right of acquisition (1 Pet. II, 9); He purchased us with His blood, His life and His labors, that we might be His by a double title. St. Paul exclaims: You are no longer your own, for you have been bought with a great price (1 Cor. VI, 19). O Jesus, my King, my Lord, my God, rule over me, govern me, exercise full and absolute power over all that is of me.

III. POINT.

“Render to God the things that are God’s.” God has given us, or lent to us, or deposited in our hands, all that we have, with the obligation to restore it to Him. There is nothing in us which ought not to be employed and consumed in His honor and service: our minds should contemplate Him, our hearts should love Him, our tongues should bless Him, all our senses, all our faculties should render Him homage. St. Paul says: “All things are yours, . . . you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. III, 22, 23). God made all things for man, and man for Himself alone (St. Augustine). All

things are ours, that we may make them serve for the glory of Jesus, to whom we belong; and, as He belongs to God, we must belong to Him also. O Jesus, receive my soul and my body, my mind and my heart, all that I am, all that I have, and all that I can do. I am Thine by every right, and I wish to be Thine by my voluntary donation. Deign to receive me into the arms of Thy paternal Providence.

Saturday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

Motives for encouragement.

I. POINT.

“He is faithful who hath called you”, and will finish the work which He hath begun in you.

(1 Thess. V, 24.)

This confidence of the apostle should confirm ours, and sustain us in the temptations to depression and discouragement which the devil endeavors to inspire, or into which our own weakness often plunges us. It is true that we are very imperfect and fragile; but God Himself will be our strength. If He had pity on us when we were His enemies, He will not abandon us after having received us into the number of His children (Eph. II, 12). He does not leave His works imperfect, and it is said of Him that He does not repent of His gifts (Rom. XI, 29). O my God, it would be only my ingratitude that would cause my ruin. O Lord, who hast loaded me with Thy benefits, preserve them; add to them that of imprinting in my heart an eternal gratitude, which will render me worthy to enjoy the fruits of Thy love and goodness.

II. POINT.

The Lord, who has begun His work in you, will complete it (1 Thess. V, 24). We ought to entreat Him

to do this by representing to Him what He has already done for us. He has drawn us from nothing, and established us over all the works of His hands (Ps. VIII, 7); He has created us to His image out of His goodness alone: how, then, could we distrust Him? If we add to this first benefit that by which He has made us a new creature, created by Jesus Christ unto good works, how should we not hope for all from Him? Thou hast done so much for me, O Lord, and Thou dost still do so much for me every day, that I must expect all from Thee. Thou didst die for me, Thou dost give me the price of Thy life and Thy blood; Thou dost give me this same blood, Thou dost give me Thyself entirely in the holy Eucharist: could it be only to abandon me afterwards? Could such a price, such inconceivable benefits be lavished upon me in vain? No, I cannot believe it. Therefore, O Lord, I will say boldly, but with the most profound humility: He who hath begun the work of my salvation, will complete it (Phil. I, 6); and this shall be my hope.

III. POINT.

God made us without us; He regenerated us in Himself by a favor so gratuitous, that He granted it, even before we were in a condition to know it; but for the grace which is to crown all the others, the gift of perseverance, to which salvation is attached, although it is no less gratuitous than the first, and although we cannot merit it, our co-operation is necessary to secure it (St. Augustine). We need grace to desire to persevere, but this desire is in our power, because grace is never wanting to us, when our will corresponds to it. Men will acknowledge at the judgment, that grace was not wanting to them, but that they were wanting to grace; that God did not deprive them of His love, but

that they deprived His love of their co-operation. God is so good, that He abandons only those who forsake Him, and does not take away from us His love, unless we take from Him our hearts. Let us persevere; let us not grow weary of doing good works; with the apostle let us ask of God, that our charity may abound (Thes. III, 12), that our love for Him may increase unceasingly in light and understanding, that we may advance towards Him, and may attach ourselves to Him more and more every day.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*)

The woman cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment.

I. POINT.

"A woman troubled with an issue of blood ten years" (Mat. IX, 20), weak in body, but strong and courageous in mind, and full of faith in Jesus, approaching Him, touched the hem of His garment, saying within herself: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed" (Mat. IX, 21). As in balm, which is a very small plant, everything is odoriferous and exhales a sweet perfume, the root, the bark, the branches, the leaves and the fruits: so in Jesus Christ our Lord everything is sanctifying, His body, His soul, His words, His movements, His actions and even His garments. All that comes from Him inspires life, exhales the perfume of grace; and pours an oil of sanctification into souls. O Jesus, "full of grace and of truth" (John I, 14), and of all the vir-

*) When there are only twenty-three Sundays after Pentecost, this and the following six meditations should be omitted, and in their stead those given for the *last Sunday, etc.*, after Pentecost should be used.

tues, always ready to communicate Thyself to us, and to do us good, vouchsafe to pour upon me of Thy fulness.

II. POINT.

“Who is it that touched Me?” asks Jesus. “Somebody hath touched Me, for I know that virtue hath gone out from Me” (Luke VIII, 45). The touch of Christ’s holy humanity is efficacious to heal bodies, and to purify and sanctify souls. Virtues radiate from Him as the rays from the sun, as waters flow from their source. Blessed are they who do not oppose obstacles to His salutary effects, who open their eyes to His light, who allow their hearts to be warmed by His powerful and divine heat, who approach this fountain of grace to receive its sacred overflow, who desire the sovereign good with as much ardor, as God Himself has to pour Himself forth and communicate Himself by His abundance, His fulness and His goodness; for Thou art, O Lord, the true “Sun of justice” (Mal. IV, 2), always beneficent towards well disposed hearts.

III. POINT.

“I know that virtue is gone out from Me. Who is it that touched Me?” Not all those who approach Jesus and touch Him, do it as they ought, and consequently they do not feel the efficacy of His touch; for many press upon Him, and thus cause Him only pain: such are they, who treat holy things with indifference and want of devotion, who communicate unworthily, or with coldness or negligence. But they touch Jesus truly and worthily, who approach Him in holy Communion with humility, respect, love and compunction; who, being themselves moved by salutary fear and full of confidence in Him, feel the virtue that goes out from Him, and gather the fruits of the tree of

life. St. Peter said to Him: "Master, the multitudes throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say: who touched Me?" (Luke VIII, 45). The multitude pressed Jesus, and in pressing Him they incommoded Him: only the sick woman touched Him full of faith, and, touching Him in this manner, gained His heart; therefore she alone felt the virtue of His life-giving touch, and received a perfect cure. O Lord, may I thus touch Thy heart, and in the reception of Thy sacred Body may I recover the life and health of my soul!

Monday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

We should already live in heaven.

I. POINT.

But as for us, we live and have our conversation already in heaven. (Phil. III, 20.)

A living body is inseparable from its head: wherever the head is found, there also are the members. Jesus Christ, who is our head, is already in heaven; we are there in Him, and so long as we remain united to Him: therefore, the grace which the Church causes us to ask of God on the day of His Ascension, is that we may dwell with Him in heaven, in heart and mind. Let us never separate from our august head; let us follow Him in the crib, to Calvary and finally into heaven: according to the expression of St. Paul, we are already seated there with Him (Eph. II, 6); and if we are found conformed to Him in His sufferings and death, we shall be so in His life and His glory. Let us lift ourselves to Him unceasingly; let us look up to the eternity which He offers us; let us despise these fleeting moments, saying with David: I have always present to my mind the eternal years (Ps. LXXVI, 6).

II. POINT.

We live in heaven, when we have our treasure there, that is, when we sacrifice our desires, our affections, whatever attaches us to the world, or fixes our heart here below, in order to secure that heavenly mansion (2 Cor. V, 1), eternal in the heavens, built by God Himself, that kingdom which is our inheritance, where our Father and King already reigns, and where we hope to reign with Him. Let us cease to amass transitory goods, which are liable to rust and to be taken by thieves; but let us lay up a treasure in heaven, where it can never be snatched away from us; let us devote ourselves to all kinds of good works, and let us send this precious treasure before us. If any one has his treasure on earth, he thinks only of earth; but if he has placed it in heaven, he will be occupied only with heaven; for Christ says: "Where thy treasure is, there thy heart is also" (Mat. VI, 21).

III. POINT.

We live in heaven by prayer; and our prayer ought to be continual (Luke XVIII, 1), according to the counsel of Christ and His apostle. Prayer raises our mind to God; it unites us to Him; by it we converse with Him, with the saints, with the heavenly spirits, with all the inhabitants of heaven, who regard us as their fellow-citizens, as companions destined to share the happiness which they enjoy; we live in heaven by meditating on the Holy Scriptures. As night does not extinguish the light of the stars, says St. Gregory, so iniquity does not blind the faithful; always fixed in the firmament of God, they despise all earthly things, and do not trouble themselves with what passes here below. Finally, we live in heaven through the Blessed Eucharist, since therein we really possess Him, whose

presence is the beatitude of heaven, and whose absence would make it a hell. O Lord, may I know my happiness, and profit by it; may it be all my delight, my consolation, my joy, there to adore Thee, there to praise Thee, there to contemplate Thee, O eternal Beauty and Goodness, whom the angels behold and desire to behold eternally (1 Pet. I, 12), without ever being satiated.

Tuesday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

We should have an humble confidence in Christ.

I. POINT.

“A woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Jesus and touched the hem of His garment, for she said within herself: If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed” (Mat. IX, 20).

The humility of this woman who remains behind the Son of God, and who dares not present herself before Him, represents that which should fill the soul of the true penitent when he approaches the Saviour. The same thing is said of Magdalen, that she remained behind Him, prostrate at His feet (Luke VII, 38). That is where we should place ourselves; it is the place that we ought to choose, and it is even too honorable for us: the sight of the greatness of Jesus and of our own baseness, of our diseases, our spiritual infirmities, should cover us with confusion, fill us with holy fear and penetrate us with profound respect before Him; we ought to say with David: “O Lord, heal me, for I have sinned against Thee” (Ps. XL, 5).

II. POINT.

The humility of this woman in no way diminishes her faith and confidence; she thought herself really unworthy to be looked upon by Jesus, or to approach Him; but she recognized His sovereign power, and said

within herself with certainty, that He was all-powerful to heal her, and so full of grace and virtue, that the mere touch of His garment would be sufficient to restore her to perfect health; she believes in His power and confides in His goodness. Thus we ought to glorify Jesus, trembling before His holiness and justice, confessing ourselves wicked and guilty, but hoping for a pardon which we do not deserve, relying upon His power to which nothing is impossible, upon His goodness which is infinite, and rendering ourselves worthy of His graces by an humble gratitude and a faithful co-operation.

III. POINT.

“Go in peace, and be thou made whole of thy disease” (Mark V, 34). These words contain a great instruction: “Go”, said Jesus; we must always walk and advance in the way of God. “No man, putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke IX, 62). St. Bernard says: Not to advance in the narrow way which leads to it, is to go back. “Go in peace”: trouble and uneasiness are an obstacle to all good. Jesus takes pleasure in the peaceful soul, He warns us not to have any care for the morrow, not to let our hearts be troubled, and to confide entirely in Him for all our wants. St. Paul recommends nothing so earnestly as this peace. Finally, Jesus adds: “Be thou made whole of thy disease.” Corporal maladies yield at once to His power; but alas! those of our souls are obstinate in spite of His efforts, because we love them, we flatter them, we encourage them; and, whilst asking for our cure, we refuse the remedies which He prescribes, we oppose our malice to His goodness, our hardness to His grace. O Jesus, vouchsafe to conquer my resistance, and, whatever it

may cost me, destroy sin in me and all my evil habits; triumph over them, come and reign in me: "Guide my steps in Thy paths" (Ps. CXVIII, 133), that I may walk therein perfectly, and never turn aside.

Wednesday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

Let us have recourse to Christ to raise us and also to preserve us
from the death of sin.

I. POINT.

*"A certain ruler came up to Jesus and adored Him,
saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but
come, lay Thy hand on her, and she shall live."
(Mat. IX, 18.)*

The longer we remain in the state of sin, the more our soul becomes weak, blind and corrupt; we cannot have too prompt recourse to penance and to the mercy of Jesus. At the very moment we have the misfortune to sin, without waiting, in the same place without leaving it, we should turn to Jesus and say to Him: Lord, even now, at this moment, my soul has unhappily fallen; I have just offended Thee, I have fallen into the death of sin; come, I beseech Thee, raise me up, move me with compunction, penetrate me with lively sorrow for having displeased Thee; extend the powerful arm of Thy mercy (Luke I, 51), and by Thy goodness help me, restore me to life: I should die without Thee, O Lord, but without Thee I cannot be restored to life (St. Augustine).

II. POINT.

"The girl is not dead, but sleepeth" (Mat. IX, 24). Jesus spoke thus, either because the death of the saints is called a sleep, and, in dying, they live and repose in God rather than die; or because it was as easy to Jesus to deliver the maid from the arms of death, as to awaken

her from a simple sleep; or, finally, because she had been dead only for a short time, and He was soon to restore her to life. Jesus permitted the people to believe that she was asleep, to conceal His miracle and to avoid the glory and the applause which it would bring upon Him; therefore, after having accomplished it, He forbade them to publish it (Mark V, 43). Thus He often acted, and showed us by His example the disinterested humility which should accompany our good works and our charity towards our neighbor. O Jesus, great teacher of humility, may I learn from Thee to avoid all vanity, all ostentation; may I refer all to Thee, and may I delight to live hidden, unknown and forgotten by the world.

III. POINT.

“The girl is not dead, but sleepeth.” We often sleep in a fatal slumber which exposes us to the danger of death, and then we ought to beseech Jesus to awaken us, that is, to arrest us on the slope of the abyss of sin, that we may not fall; we ought to implore His assistance against our invisible enemies, to beseech Him to combat for us, to destroy their efforts. Jesus said to the maiden: “Arise”. He commands with authority even death itself; for He holds the keys of death and hell (Apoc. I, 18); He orders death and life, “He bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again” (1 Kings II, 6). Let us fear Him and love Him at the same time: let us fear Him, since our fate is in His hands; let us love Him, since to render it favorable, and to procure us a happy lot, He Himself said, did and suffered so many and such great things. O sovereign and most lovable power of Jesus, to which we should subject ourselves in life and death! “O Lord, Thou art my God, my lot is in Thy hands” (Ps. XXX, 16).

Abandon me not. Thou art my Saviour, "Thou hast extended Thy hands over me, and Thy right hand shall save me" (Ps. CXXXVII, 7).

Thursday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

In holy Communion we touch Jesus Himself, and are nourished with His Flesh.

I. POINT.

"If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."
(Mat. IX, 20.)

Looking at Jesus on the altar, let us say with this holy woman: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed"; and what is the garment of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, if not the species, which surround and, as a garment, cover His sacred body? How many there are, exclaims a holy Father, who say: I would wish to see His face, to touch the hem of His garment? But approach the altar; there you will see Him, there you will touch Him, you will be nourished with Him. This holy Table is another Crib; the Magi adored Jesus an infant in the stable, and here you are permitted to receive Him and be nourished with Him. Therefore, we are more favored than they who saw Him and conversed with Him upon earth, since we may every day, and at every hour, speak to Him, adore Him, receive Him and carry this precious treasure away with us.

II. POINT.

Here is a contest between the goodness of Jesus and the humility of this woman. She, trembling and timid, did not venture to approach Jesus, still less to appear in His presence or pray to Him; but Jesus, who grants the desire of the poor (Ps. IX, 10), and who listens to the cry of their hearts, encourages and consoles her, saying to her with divine goodness: "Daugh-

ter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made the whole'' (Mat. IX, 22). The faith of this woman was great, since it merited to obtain what she hoped for, and to be praised by the Eternal Truth. But Thy mercy and clemency, O Lord, appear in a still more marvelous manner in what concerns me, for Thou dost permit me to touch, not only Thy garment become precious by the contact of Thy pure flesh, but even Thy own flesh with which Thou dost nourish me in the Sacrament of the altar. I come, then, to Thee full of a holy confidence that Thou wilt heal my infirmities, that Thou wilt raise me from my languor and restore life and health to my soul.

III. POINT.

The Gospel mentions three women who implored the assistance of Jesus during His mortal life, and whose virtues may teach us the dispositions that we ought to bring to holy Communion. The woman of Chanaan was not ashamed to compare herself to the little dogs that are satisfied with the crumbs that fall from their master's table (Mat. XV, 22); she shows us how great should be our humility, when we approach Jesus at the altar. The Samaritan woman sighed only for the water of eternal life, which was to quench her thirst forever (John IV, 7); she makes known to us the fervor which should animate us in the reception of the Blessed Eucharist. Finally, this poor sufferer is so penetrated with esteem for her Saviour, that she does not doubt for a moment that He will heal her, if she can only succeed in touching the hem of His garment; thus she teaches us what should be our faith, our confidence, our love, when we wish not simply to touch the garment, but to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ. O Lord, give me these holy dispositions, whenever I have the happiness

to communicate, that my holy Communion may be for Thy glory and my sanctification.

Friday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

We should love and bear the cross.

I. POINT.

“Many walk that are enemies of the Cross of Christ.”
(*Phil. III, 18.*)

Who are they? St. Paul says that they are those who enjoy earthly things, who seek only the goods, the honors and the satisfactions of earth. What can be more opposed to the Cross of Jesus Christ, since the Cross preaches to us, not a life of delights, but the mortification, the humility, the hardships and the austerities of penance? We may boast of being Christians, we may glory in imprinting on our brow this glorious name, but if it does not act in our heart by the love of humiliation and suffering, we are only hypocrites. Whoever has not the spirit of Jesus Christ, is not His. He who flatters himself that he belongs to Him, must live as He did (1 John II, 6); must bear his cross after Him. They, on the contrary, who devote themselves to pleasure and vanity, are His enemies; they crucify Him afresh in their hearts (Heb. VI, 6), instead of crucifying themselves; for St. Paul says: “They who are Christ’s, have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences” (Gal. V, 24).

II. POINT.

We are the enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ, when we scandalize souls for which He suffered and died on the Cross; when we render vain for ourselves and others the pains, the sorrows, the labors of Jesus; when we diminish the virtue of the Cross by which He has saved and redeemed us; when we destroy ourselves

and others by our evil examples. Therefore the Saviour pronounces this anathema: "Woe to the world because of scandals" (Mat. XVI, 7), and assures us that it would be better for us to be precipitated into the lowest depth of the sea, than to scandalize the least of His disciples. Hence St. Chrysostom makes Him say: If you scandalize this soul, for which I died, you declare yourself the enemy of My Cross.

III. POINT.

"Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, who are enemies of the Cross of Christ." These enemies of the Cross truly merit our tears so much the more, because they do not weep themselves. The more they repose in the joy of the world and the gratification of their passions, the more they fly from crosses in this life, the more painful and overwhelming sufferings they will undergo in the other. These crosses, these pains will be everlasting, since St. Paul assures us that the end of the enemies of the Cross is destruction (Phil. III, 19), and that, having relied only on fleeting things, they will infallibly perish with them. Let us weep over their misfortune and beware of imitating them. The Cross should be inseparable from the Christian: if no one crucifies him, he should crucify himself. "The disciple is not greater than his Master" (John XIII, 16). Whoever wishes to live, to reign and to be glorified with Jesus, must humble himself, suffer and die with Him.

Saturday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

How to live in heaven already here on earth.

I. POINT.

"But our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. III, 20).

We live in heaven by faith, seeing it as expressed in visible things. Thus the ancient patriarchs saw only

heaven in the promised land, because it represented to them another land, invisible and divine, upon which they fixed their desires and centred all their affections. According to St. Paul, all our thoughts should be for heaven, and our life should be entirely heavenly. Heaven is our true country, and we ought to live in this world only as in a place of exile, or a passage that leads to the blessed abode, which Jesus Christ assures us He has gone to prepare for us (John XIV, 2). The Church every day warns her children to raise their hearts above earthly things, in order to awaken their faith and ardor, to excite them to follow Jesus Christ glorious, and to live united with Him in such a manner, that they may say with truth that their conversation is in heaven.

II. POINT.

We live in heaven by hope, which detaches us from present goods, showing us constantly the incomparable excellence of future goods. Hope enables us to bear the trials of our pilgrimage with joy, knowing that by patience they will lead us to the desired haven, where we shall rest from our labors, where we shall gather the fruit of our combats, and obtain the reward of our victories. As a vessel in the midst of the ocean salutes the port from afar, without fearing the angry waves, when it is firmly held by its anchor, so, says St. Paul, we have already placed our hope as an anchor (Heb. VI, 19) in that blessed land to which we aspire, the port of salvation which we are approaching, and we are already saved by this hope (Rom. VIII, 24), which is never confounded; "for the Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. III, 25).

III. POINT.

Finally, we live in heaven by love; "where our treasure is, there is our heart also"; we are where we

find pleasure; often our heart is not where our body is; it is where our desires are centred; St. Augustine says, it reposes in what it loves. Where our love is, there we find our pleasure, our joy, our happiness. Love is a magnet which draws us after it; therefore, says St. Augustine, if you love the earth, you are earthly, but if you love God, what shall I say but that you are gods. If you love heaven, you are already citizens of heaven (St. Gregory). The souls of the just, who even now relish divine things, are no longer of this world, although they appear to live still in the flesh: therefore St. Bernard said, that the martyrs were not in their bodies. Their soul would have failed under the horrible tortures, if it had not been already lifted up into heaven.

The last Sunday after Pentecost. *)

The abomination of desolation in the holy place.

I. POINT.

“When you shall see the abomination of desolation in the holy place.” (Mat. XXIV, 15.)

The first temple, and that which deserved to be called pre-eminently the holy place, is the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the living temple of the Divinity by which it was sanctified; for St. Paul says: “In Him the fulness of the Divinity dwelleth corporally” (Col.

*) This and the following six meditations are for the last Sunday, etc., after Pentecost. When there are twenty-five Sundays after Pentecost, the meditations for the twenty-fourth Sunday, etc., should be taken from the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany. If there are twenty-six, then take the meditations for the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth Sundays from the fifth and sixth Sundays after the Epiphany. If there are twenty-seven or twenty-eight Sundays after Pentecost, supply the meditations from the third, fourth and other Sundays after the Epiphany, in such a manner that the following meditations be always reserved for the last Sunday after Pentecost and its week.

II, 9); a holy temple and infinitely worthy to be adored! Never was the abomination of sin found in this holy place: the darkness would sooner mingle with the light, the rising sun would more easily unite with the setting sun, than sin with Jesus; He is at the same time a divine temple, the holy Pontiff, innocent and free from all stain, "separated from sinners, higher than the heavens" (Heb. VII, 26), and as Jesus, a word which means Saviour, He is the Victim that saves and delivers penitent sinners. O Jesus, purify me from all the stains of sin, make me a partaker of Thy purity and of the plenitude of Thy holiness.

II. POINT.

Every soul should be a holy place, the temple of God, but a temple purified from the abomination of sin. St. Paul says: "Your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. VI, 19); and elsewhere: "The temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. III, 17). How great is the dignity of the soul, since it is the temple of God! But it is a deplorable abomination to violate its holiness, to profane this sanctuary of God, to place therein the idol of vanity, of love of the world and of self. O Holy Ghost, permit not so great a disorder; but come, sanctify our bodies and our souls; make them temples consecrated to the love and glory of Thy Supreme Majesty.

III. POINT.

The churches in which Jesus Christ dwells in His august Sacrament, are holy temples, not less worthy of veneration than the heavens themselves. Woe to those who dishonor them by introducing into them the abomination of sin, by attacking God and insulting Him even on the throne of His mercy and goodness, by their irreverence and criminal dissipation! But woe

also, with much more reason, to those sacrilegious wretches who presume there to receive into their impure hearts the divine Master, Jesus Christ Himself, who wishes to make His abode in them! It is indeed they, who, by their unworthy profanation, bring the abomination of desolation into the holy place. Their heart by holy Communion becomes the temple of the Saviour; and, at the side of this Man-God, they erect therein a throne to the devil, His most cruel enemy. O horror, deserving of the most terrible chastisements! O Lord, never permit me to fall into so frightful a crime! Thou art the God of hosts, the God of all sanctity; make my heart holy, virtuous, all aglow with Thy love, that Thou mayst find it worthy of Thee, and make it Thy abode.

Monday after the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

The separation on the day of judgment.

I. POINT.

“He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats” (Mat. XXV, 32).

In this life sinners are mingled with the good, the condemned with the elect, and the children of darkness with the children of light, without any possibility of distinguishing them. Thus formerly the Egyptians were mingled with the Israelites; thus the tares are mingled with the good grain, the wheat with the straw, the wise virgins with the foolish. But at the last judgment the separation will be made; the Egyptians will be submerged, the tares and the straw will be cast into the fire, the foolish virgins will be excluded from the wedding hall, from eternal life: a separation which will excite horror and despair in the damned souls; a separation that in many cases will be made between members of the same family! For there are everywhere

lambs and goats. In the same field one, according to the words of Supreme Truth, will be taken for glory, the other left, and condemned to hell (Mat. XXIV, 40); one will be crowned, and the other condemned.

II. POINT.

“As the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, He will separate them one from another.” Jesus Christ Himself will make this separation, and in the same form of a servant, in which He was seen on earth, poor, humble, meek and enduring an unjust condemnation, He will judge all the world, and even His judges; He will appear glorious and impassible, and the prayer which He made to His Father on the eve of His Passion, will be perfectly accomplished: “Father, glorify Me with the glory which I had in Thee before the world was made” (John XVII, 5); for on this great day He will be supremely glorified. All men will either adore and love Him, or will dread Him and be subject to His power.

III. POINT.

The wicked shall be excluded forever from the company of the good. They will be filled with rage and confusion, they will remain speechless, seeing the abyss of their crimes and their sins open before the abyss of the holiness of Jesus, the Holy of holies, by whom they will be condemned without reprieve; the band of the just will, on the contrary, be filled with joy, knowing that for them the heavenly Father has prepared His kingdom. The simple and humble poor, who have shared the sufferings and humiliations of Jesus upon earth, will see Him reigning in His glory; they will participate in it and will be seated upon thrones to judge the world with Him (Mat. XIX, 28); they will reap the sweet fruits of their bitter penance, at the right

hand of their Shepherd and Master, who will be their Father, their Redeemer, their life and their treasure for all eternity. In this expectation how light should all the labors and sufferings of this life appear! O most lovable Judge, grant me grace to say truthfully with one of Thy disciples: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, as to the rest the crown of justice is laid up for me, and for all those who love Thy coming" (2 Tim. IV, 7).

Tuesday after the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

Sin, the abomination of desolation.

I. POINT.

"When you shall see the abomination of desolation in the holy place."

(Mat. XXIV, 15.)

By this abomination we may understand, according to some authors, Antichrist who will cause himself to be adored, or, according to others, the idol that was placed in the temple to be worshipped by the Jews (St. Jerome). In the latter sense, this idol was the figure of sin; for sin is called by the apostle the serving of idols: thus pride, the love of pleasure and riches, render him an idolator who loves possessions, his own excellence and earthly gratifications more than God, since by his inordinate love he prefers all that to the love and obedience which he owes to the Supreme Being; a preference infinitely injurious to the infinite greatness of God and to His divine perfections; an abominable preference which turns man aside from the Supreme Good, to attach him to a base creature and to make him its slave; a preference of which God Himself complains by His prophet: "My people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have digged for themselves broken cisterns, that hold

no water" (Jer. II, 13); a preference of which the sinner is consequently the dupe, and which finally precipitates him into the abyss of all miseries; for what else can we expect, when we abandon the Creator to devote ourselves to the creature!

II. POINT.

God is our first beginning and our last end (Apoc. XXII, 13); he, then, who attaches himself to the creature, and puts his confidence in it, robs God of the honor which belongs to Him, and, by an unworthy subversion, regards and loves as his end, what is made only for his use. Whoever confides in himself or in created things, to the prejudice of the fidelity which he owes to his Lord, is guilty of an enormous injustice, and, in deed, if not in words, of blasphemy, for he proclaims by his works and his conduct, that the creature is for him better, more useful and more worthy of his adoration than the Creator; for, says St. Augustine, we adore only what we love. A detestable abomination, which made the faithful Mardocheaus say: God forbid that "I should ever transfer the honor of my God to a man" (Esth. XIII, 14).

III. POINT.

"Who is like unto God?" (Ps. LXXXVIII, 9). By these words St. Michael repressed the pride of Lucifer, and hurled him from the highest heaven into the lowest depths of hell. By the same words we ought to repel the darts of this invisible enemy, and repress our own passions, when they rebel against God. "Who is like unto God?" Who can dispute our hearts with Him? Who is like unto God, just, holy, element and merciful? Who can make himself equal to Him? At the sight of His infinite perfections, who will not humble himself and sink into his nothingness? Who will not

yield to Him? Would our wild and unjust passions dare to rise up in His presence? Ought they not, on the contrary, to surrender their arms and break them before Him? O my God, my final end, my only good, the one thing necessary—Thee alone will I seek, follow and love; I will sacrifice all other loves to Thine: take my heart; Thou alone, O Lord, art worthy to possess it entirely, but make it worthy to be possessed by Thee.

Wednesday after the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

Let us anticipate the terrors of the last judgment.

I. POINT.

“They shall see the Son of man coming with great power and majesty.” (Luke XXI, 27).

Jesus Christ, who appears to-day as a meek lamb, will appear at the last day as a formidable lion. He, whom men condemned, will be established judge of the living and the dead; all will appear before Him, and their eternal fate will be in His hands. It will no longer be the time of mercy; clemency will give place to justice, His goodness will yield to His equitable severity. His open wounds, which, like so many eloquent mouths, now solicit pardon for sinners, will henceforth pronounce only severe sentences, and will demand vengeance on His enemies. Let us anticipate the just Judge now during the reign of His meekness and grace; let us not compel Him by our sins, to become inexorable; let us move Him by an humble confession (Ps. XCIV, 6), whilst He can and wills to be moved; let us approach the throne of His grace with confidence, that we may find mercy (1 Cor. XI, 32), and that we may not be condemned with the world.

II. POINT.

“The powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke XXI, 26). As when the master is angry with his ser-

vants, the children of the house tremble; as they who are on the firm ground and in a safe port, shudder, seeing the raging waves of the stormy sea; so the saints and angels, who are the powers of heaven, beholding our Lord in the majesty of His glory, armed with His avenging justice against sinners, will be filled with astonishment, not through fear of being separated from Him, but through reverence and respect for His supreme greatness and awful justice. Shall not we, who are dust and ashes, humble ourselves under His mighty hand? "If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. IV, 18). How shall we not fear the inflexible justice of the dreadful Judge, whose sentence will be without appeal?

III. POINT.

St. Paul says that, if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged by God (1 Cor. XI, 31). Let us summon our conscience to judgment before the coming of Jesus Christ. Certainly we shall all appear before Him on the day of His vengeance; while there is yet time, let us ask our soul what would be her fate, if the Sovereign Judge would place her on the side of the damned. What bitter regrets and tears! But these regrets and tears will then be entirely unavailing! Then what would we not wish to have done and suffered? What would we not wish to have embraced or abandoned, hated or loved? Let us reflect seriously. Now we can choose and act; but then we shall desire, but we shall be unable to act. On the contrary, if our portion is with the saints, what joy, what consolation, what thanks shall we offer to God? O how pleasant, how delicious will be the fruits of our penitential labors! We shall exclaim: O blessed sufferings, which have merited for us a lot so favorable, which have acquired for us so great a glory!

Thursday after the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

We must do God's will, and suffer cheerfully.

I. POINT.

"We cease not to pray for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will, . . . that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing."
(Col. I, 9, 10.)

The study of a true Christian should be to know what God wishes from him, and all his care and desire should be to accomplish it; for Christ says: He who knows the will of his master and does it not, shall be more severely punished (Luke XII, 47). You are blessed, O people of God, to whom He will manifest all His will, that, by observing it, you may live (Bar. IV, 4). We must know, we must learn, we must hear the words which God will address to us, but that is not sufficient: "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Lord" (Mat. VII, 21). Blessed, then, are the faithful who hear His word and keep it (Luke XI, 28).

II. POINT.

Be clothed with strength to suffer your afflictions with joy, with patience, with perseverance (Col. I, 11). We cannot follow the narrow way of the commandments of God, without meeting with obstacles from the world, the devil and our own selves. St. Paul says: "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. III, 12); therefore he asks of God, that we may be clothed with strength and power from on high, that we may not sink under tribulation, but may profit by it; hence he wishes us to endure our trials with resignation, with patience, and even with joy, waiting for the Lord who will deliver us, not growing weary in this humble expectation, knowing that "he who shall persevere to

the end, shall be saved" (Mat. X, 22), and that the longest suffering of this life is only a moment compared with the eternal reward which is to follow. Jesus gives us now the pledge of this reward, by nourishing our souls with the heavenly bread which communicates eternal life, the bread of the strong, which sustains in present evils, the food of immortality, which is the promise of future goods, and our only consolation in our exile.

III. POINT.

"Giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints" (Col. I, 12). To give all the merit to our sufferings, we should bear them with thanksgiving, recognizing that they are the portion of the friends and the children of God. The angel said to Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. XII, 13). "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. XII, 6). Faith knows no happiness on earth but the Cross. Christ says: Blessed are you, when men persecute you and speak evil of you (Mat. V, 11). Woe to you, ye rich, for you have received your consolation (Luke VI, 24); but "blessed are they that mourn" (Mat. V, 5). It is the lot of the saints, their privilege, to suffer on earth, and since Jesus, the Saint of saints, raised the standard of the Cross, there is no salvation but in the Cross. Thus, when the fire of persecution tries you, be not surprised, but rejoice that you have a share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ; for you will be filled with joy when He shall appear in His glory (1 Pet. IV, 13).

Friday after the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

Let us prepare for judgment.

I. POINT.

“When you shall see the abomination of desolation in the holy place.” (Mat. XXIV, 15.)

The holy temple profaned and destroyed, is only a faint picture of the sinful profanation of the soul, the true temple of the Holy Ghost, for sin separates it from God, and deprives it forever of His love, of His grace and glory. The prophet Isaias says: Your iniquities have raised a wall of separation between you and your God (Is. LIX, 2). In fact, sin makes the soul His enemy and the object of His eternal indignation. Jesus Christ suffered death to give us life, to open to us heaven, but, O abomination, sufficient to desolate heaven and earth, to afflict the angels of peace! sin deprives us of life and banishes us from heaven; it causes us to lose all the rights to the kingdom, which Jesus had acquired for us, all the rights to the character of children of God; it renders vain for us His labors, His sufferings and all His merits; it tramples under foot the Son of God; it profanes the precious Blood of the New Covenant, it wrongs the spirit of grace; it crucifies afresh the Lord of glory, and, by a detestable impiety, it renews as far as possible all the torments of His passion (Hebr. VI, 6). Yet all these horrors, all these enormous excesses are contained in a transient action that lasts but a moment. O fatal moment, which requires an infinite atonement, or an eternity of torments!

II. POINT.

The threats Jesus Christ makes to inspire us with a horror for sin, and to fill us with fear for the severity of His judgments, are a striking proof of His love for us. David said: Thou dost warn those that fear Thee,

of the evils suspended over their heads, that they may take precautions to avoid them; Thou dost give them a sign, that they may fly before Thy bow; Thou dost frighten them, Thou dost threaten them, while they still have time to labor for their salvation, that they may not be surprised, when they shall no longer be able to work. St. Augustine says, this salutary apprehension of the judgments of God, puts us on our guard, that, watching carefully over ourselves, we may have nothing to fear. He adds: You that dread this terrible Judge, who is one day to pronounce sentence on you, begin at this very moment to render Him favorable to you by changing your life.

III. POINT.

The judgment of Jesus Christ is not only to be feared and anticipated, it is also to be desired, for, if it is formidable to the wicked, it is very desirable for the good. St. Augustine says: Why do men so greatly fear this great Judge? He has not yet come, let them correct their life, and then, instead of trembling, they will rejoice. Delay not the execution of your good resolutions, under pretext that the Lord will delay His coming: it will be hard for those who have hard hearts; it will be sweet to those who have been meek and humble: the wicked must dread it, because of the punishments which they expect, but the good should be impatient to see it, because of the crown which they will then receive. The Lord exhorts the former to be converted, and the latter not to relax, but, on the contrary, to grow in virtue, in proportion as they approach their reward; to flee more and more to the mountains, that is, to rise to a higher perfection; to imitate the greatest saints and even the Holy of holies, without coming down from the roof (Mat. XXIV, 17), that is,

without relapsing into evil habits, or the sloth of their past life.

Saturday after the last Sunday after Pentecost.

I. POINT.

“Let them that are in Judea, flee to the mountains.”

(Mat. XXIV, 16).

Jesus counsels us to flee, to pass quickly from sin to grace, from the Judea of the vanities and dangerous occasions of the world, to the mountains of retreat and evangelical perfection. He says to us, as the angel said to Lot: Save thy soul (Gen. XIX, 17). He repeats to us what is written in the prophets: Flee, save your souls (Jer. XLVIII, 6). “He that loveth danger, shall perish therein” (Eccli. III, 27). “He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little” (Eccli. XIX, 1), and very soon, into great faults. Flight is disgraceful in temporal warfare; but in the spiritual it is always useful and glorious. To flee at the sight of sin is to advance towards the immortal crown. Let us carefully flee from sin, let us abandon it forever; let us fear even the shadow of prevarication, and let us flee to the mountain; let us rise above ourselves and all that is not God, and we shall surely reign with Him.

II. POINT.

“Pray that your flight may not be in the winter” (Mat. XXIV, 20). Winter represents the cooling of charity, which Jesus predicts in the Gospel: Woe to those who shall be surprised in this mortal coldness, who shall be found without the warmth of divine love, cold for God, insensible to their salvation, without grace and in the fatal ice of mortal sin! for, as St. Gregory says, the death which separates the soul from the body, is only a shadow of death; the real death is

that which separates the soul from God. Christ adds: "Woe to them that are with child (Mat. XXIV, 19), that is, to souls that have conceived good desires, without bringing forth good works, who abuse grace, and do not profit by it. Such desires are weak and inefficacious volitions; hell is full of them. Desire efficaciously; have a firm will and the sincere desire which bring forth salvation.

III. POINT.

"Pray that your flight may not be on the Sabbath" (Mat. XXIV, 20). The Sabbath in this connection represents repose, and an unhappy inaction in the work of God. He who does not labor, who remains idle, does not merit the reward. The repose of an effeminate, slothful life, without fervor and good works, is a Sabbath forbidden to the Christian. The Saviour says: "Blessed is the faithful servant whom, when the Lord cometh, He shall find watching" (Mat. XXIV, 46). Woe to him whom He shall surprise slothfully sleeping, and to him who, not having profited by his talent, shall present himself empty-handed! For the prophet says, it is not sufficient to avoid evil (Ps. XXXVI, 3), we must also do good. Let us pray that we may not be surprised in that Sabbath, which Jesus condemns, but in that which makes us rest in God, and which makes God Himself rest in the humble and peaceful heart.

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FEASTS.

St. Antony of Padua, June 13th.

I. POINT.

How St. Antony sanctified himself.

On the 13th of June, 1231, little children exclaimed through the streets of Padua: "The saint is dead! St. Antony is dead!" This wonderful event was, indeed, the heavenly proclamation of Antony's exalted virtues and sanctity. This was so evident, that less than a year after his death Pope Gregory IX. canonized him, moved by the fame of his virtues and numberless miracles. How did St. Antony become a saint? Not by performing miracles, but by the faithful practice of virtue and of the duties of his state. His detachment from the world and its goods, honors and pleasures was perfect. At the age of fifteen he renounced the world, and entered the convent of the Canons Regular at Lisbon, and soon betook himself to a more retired and solitary convent, where he made rapid progress in divine love. At the sight of the relics of the Friars Minor who had suffered martyrdom in Morocco he was filled with most intense desire of also shedding his blood for the faith; he therefore entered their order, and later set out for Africa, there to die for the faith; but Providence decided otherwise, and sent a storm which landed him in Italy. There, being unknown, he, out of humility, so concealed his wonderful learning and talents, as well as his holiness, that for nine months

he was put with the lay brothers to perform the drudgery and the menial services of the community. Most happy in thus being able to imitate the humility of the Son of God, he would have remained in obscurity all his life-time, if it had not pleased God to place him on the candlestick as a bright shining light to enlighten and reform mankind by his virtues, his learning, his wonderful eloquence and numberless miracles. Are we as detached, as self-sacrificing and as humble as St. Antony? Do we not rather seek to be known, to become famous and to do great things? Let us strive to love retirement and an humble station; if God wishes us to shine, He will take care to place us also on the candlestick; but if He does not wish us to shine, why should we seek to put ourselves forward against His will, and thus risk becoming victims of pride and losing our souls? — O my God, grant me, through the intercession of Mary and of St. Antony, the grace to be detached from the world and from myself, and to be content with the station in which Thou hast placed me.

II. POINT.

Fruits of St. Antony's sanctity.

When obedience called him to labor for the salvation of souls, he devoted himself to his new duties with a most ardent zeal. For nine years he preached with unparalleled success in several countries to immense crowds; sometimes his audience amounted to 30,000 persons. The number of sinners he brought to a life of penance and virtue is incalculable; numberless also were the heretics he brought back to the true faith. No one could resist his supernatural eloquence, for it was the spirit of God that spoke from his lips. Pope Gregory, after hearing him preach, called him "the ark of the Covenant and the arsenal of Scripture," and, on

account of the irresistible force of his arguments, he was also surnamed "the hammer of heretics." Add to this the numberless miracles that accompanied almost his every step, and his gift of prophecy, and we need not be astonished at his success. But, it may be said that his great success was owing rather to his good and holy life than either to his eloquence or his miracles, for example is, after all, the most persuasive. His great success did not fill him with pride, for he remained humble, and sought only the glory of God and the salvation of the souls redeemed by Christ. He was also noted for his great devotion to the Mother of God, for he tenderly loved her. He often had recourse to her, especially in time of sickness; in his very agony he sang in her honor the hymn "O glorious Lady, exalted above the stars." — Do we always labor with the pure intention of procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and do we always remain humble, when God deigns to bless our labors? — O my God, grant me the grace to be ever detached from every thing earthly, and from myself especially; make me truly humble, like St. Antony, Thy faithful servant, and help me to accept and bear humiliations. May I also, with the help of Thy grace, persevere in love and devotion to Mary, that she may obtain for me the grace to be faithful to Thee until death.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help.—Sunday preceding June 24th.

I. POINT.

Motives for calling Mary our Perpetual Help.

In the prayer of the Mass and Office of May 24th and in that of this feast, the Church gives this beautiful title to Mary, and this for good reasons. What is the meaning of "behold thy son," — words the dying

Redeemer addressed to Mary in favor of mankind redeemed? By these words Jesus seemed to say: "Behold him whom thou bringest forth to grace; but he is unable to preserve this grace for himself; hence I entrust him to thy care; it will devolve on thee to support him at every moment in the steep and cragged road to heaven." Is not this solemnly proclaiming Mary as "Queen and Mother of Perpetual Help?" — Our divine Saviour recommends to all men to pray always without growing weary, and promises that every one that asketh shall receive. Hence the Dispensatrix of heavenly gifts must be constantly attentive to our requests, constantly disposed to hear us, to remain, in short, the ever open channel to transmit to us the graces of salvation. And how could it be otherwise? Must we not constantly struggle against the world, the devil and our own passions? Must we not always combat in ourselves nature and her defects, our imagination and its wanderings, our judgment and its prejudices, our selfishness and its apprehensions, complaints and repugnance? Without this struggle at every moment there can be no solid virtue in the soul. But we cannot carry on this constant warfare without the perpetual help of the Mother of perseverance. As we are always children in the spiritual life, we need a Mother and a Nurse that never loses sight of us, and gives us constantly the spiritual milk necessary for our progress. Without this we cannot possibly live always recollected, pray habitually, always control ourselves, be always animated with the Spirit of God and remain faithful to our duties. O Mediatrix of our salvation, I shall never be able to sanctify myself without thy help. When I consider the picture in which thou art represented as holding Jesus in thy arms, to whom the two angels show the instru-

ments of His Passion, methinks I hear thee saying to me: "My child, look at my Son; behold what He wills to suffer to prove His eternal love for thee. He and I are always with thee; with thee in doubts, in anguish, in difficulties, in temptations; with thee at every moment, and specially at the hour of thy death."

II. POINT.

Our Duties towards our Lady of Perpetual Help.

On the memorable day when Mary received into her arms the bloody corpse of Jesus, she received, at the same time, from our Lord the noble mission to dress and cure the wounds of mankind redeemed, by dispensing to them the graces of the redemption. Mary accepted, in our favor, this merciful office, and we owe to her for it the most lively gratitude. This first duty demands all our attention, for we find in Mary not only a Queen rich in power, treasures and generosity, but also a Mother ever ready to help us, prompt in compassion and forgiveness, who, far from being shocked at our miseries, seeks preferably the most wretched, in order to relieve them. As the universal infirmarian of the children of Adam, she rests neither by day nor by night, but watches constantly near each one that invokes her, bestowing on him every care, as if she had only him to save. As St. Anselm says, she so multiplies herself, as to anticipate our prayers and grant our desires. "She is all to all," says St. Bernard; "she opens to all her merciful heart, and all receive of her fulness; the captive, deliverance, the sick, health, the afflicted, consolation, the sinner, forgiveness. No one is excluded from her favors." How grateful must we not be to her for her so generous and constant devotedness to us! The best and most pleasing token of grati-

tude we can offer her, is fidelity in corresponding to her favors. This we can do by being zealous in having recourse to her and imploring her help, her protection, her intercession. Do we act thus? Do we assiduously think of Mary, invoke Mary from our heart, contemplate her image, especially in our troubles and temptations? Does the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help produce in us the firm confidence that her firm and maternal look should inspire? — O my Saviour and my loving Mother Mary, prostrate at your feet I am resolved frequently during the day to implore your help even amid my occupations, and to encourage myself to do so by the thought that day and night I am the constant object of your solicitude and loving kindness.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, June 21st.

I. POINT.

Angelic purity of St. Aloysius.

The mere name of St. Aloysius awakens in us the thought and esteem of the angelic virtue. As soon as he was able to begin to speak, he was taught to invoke Jesus and Mary, and he did it with so much piety, that he resembled more an angel than a mortal. Being scarcely seven years of age, he resolved to renounce the world, and chose the Blessed Virgin for his advocate and protectress. When eight years old he made the vow of virginity; this drew down upon him such great graces, that thenceforth he never was troubled with a thought contrary to purity. He, nevertheless, shunned the least dangers, and so preserved modesty as not even to fix his eyes on his own mother. What a lesson for those presumptuous souls, who pretend to remain pure whilst giving every license to the eyes! His austerities, when from twelve to thirteen years old, were frightful.

Convinced that chastity must be like a lily among thorns, he was wont to fast three days every week, and he ate so little, that his life seemed kept up by some extraordinary help. After he had entered the Society of Jesus and permission was refused him to practise certain penances he supplied for them by placing himself in an uncomfortable position, so much had he at heart the subjection of the flesh to the spirit. Do we also labor strenuously to preserve purity of soul and body? Do we not fear too much the fatigue, which mortifies the senses and weakens the fire of the passions? We perhaps expect to find peace by fleeing from pain and exertion; but the peace that is based on a soft and sensual life, serves only to rekindle war in us. Is it not better to endure in security the stings of mortification, than to have to struggle against the goad of concupiscence at the risk of our salvation? — O my God, through the intercession of St. Aloysius, inspire me with the courage to mortify my looks, my palate, all my senses, and to watch unremittingly over my interior, in order to keep away every dangerous image, and every affection that is not for Thee alone.

II. POINT.

Spirit of prayer of St. Aloysius.

The love of prayer and meditation seemed natural to our saint. From his seventh year he had his devotions regulated, just as one already experienced in virtue. He was wont to rise during the night for mental prayer. Those who secretly watched him, saw him often prostrate on the ground before a crucifix, or his arms raised heavenward, or crossed on his breast, and he was heard sighing so fervently, as to be able to move the hardest hearts. After his admission into the Society of

Jesus, he cultivated constant recollection with admirable perseverance. He acknowledged that all his distractions in prayer during six months, taken together, had not lasted during the space of one *Ave Maria*. "I have," he said, "as much difficulty to distract myself from God, as others say they have in keeping recollected." The practice of mental prayer was his paradise on earth, for he found therein ineffable delight, which caused him to shed an abundance of tears, especially when he meditated on the Saviour's Passion or on His real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist. "The soul that desires to profit by meditation," he said, "should be wholly free from all affection and thought foreign to the subject prepared, otherwise she will not be able to remain attentive or receive the impressions of divine grace." Without much mental prayer, he would add, we cannot attain a high degree of holiness or gain a complete victory over ourselves, for the want of reflection is the cause why there is so much spiritual cowardice and so great a want of self-denial. Let us apply these maxims to our own conduct, and also ask ourselves, whether we faithfully make our daily meditation, whether we seriously reflect on the truths most capable of moving us, and whether we make acts of contrition, confidence and love, and petitions for grace, and practical resolutions according to our spiritual wants. — O my God, for many years the same faults defile my soul, although I daily practice meditation. Through the merits of Jesus, of Mary and of St. Aloysius, grant me the spirit of continual prayer, that I may ever be recollected and united to Thee, and may imitate the perfect purity of St. Aloysius.

St. John the Baptist, June 24th.

I. POINT.

"He shall be great before the Lord."

(Luke I, 15.)

The Holy Ghost begins the eulogy of the holy precursor with this prediction, and Jesus Christ took care to complete it on several occasions. He calls him "a burning and shining light" (John V, 35), and the greatest among the children of men (Mat. XI, 11), because, more than any other, he was burning by the fervor of his charity and the holiness of his life, and shining by the splendor of his doctrine and the zeal of his preaching. To be great before the Lord is the only greatness that is worthy of esteem; for what is great only in the eyes of men, is often abominable before God (Luke XVI, 15), and all that men praise and approve, is often condemned by Him. The approbation and applause of men are at least doubtful and unreliable; but he who is praised by Truth itself is certainly deserving of praise. St. John, whose greatness is so well established, whose holiness is so incontestable, nevertheless fears to expose both to danger, either from the flattery of the world, or from the evil example of its corrupt manners. From his tender childhood he stole away from the world, lest the world should steal his treasure from him. Scarcely had he begun to walk, when instructed and interiorly urged by the Holy Ghost, he fled into the desert. Let us say with St. Jerome, that having seen Jesus, even from the womb of his mother, before his eyes had opened to the light, he could no longer regard created things; he aspired only to see again this divine Object, and dazzled by its splendor, he wished to await in solitude the time of the

Saviour's manifestation. But we who are weak, full of sins, of passions and vices, expose ourselves boldly to dangerous occasions, calculated to excite and flatter them; we go unarmed to the combat. Can we wonder, if we perish? Let us learn from the saint, whom we honor to-day, to love retirement and silence, each one according to his state; let us remember that the world is full of precipices, and that the vast ocean of this life is filled with persons who are drowning, and who too often drag down with them those who wish to save themselves. Let us flee from its contagion, and experience with St. John, how good it is to be united to God (Ps. LXXII, 28), to see only Him, and to attach ourselves to Him alone.

II. POINT.

“Bring forth worthy fruits of penance” (Luke III, 8). Who could better address to us these words than he who, not having committed sin, yet lived in the continual practice of the most severe penance? After the obligation which he here imposes, to do penance, who will hold himself exempt therefrom? Who will think that he does not need this remedy, either to repair the past, or to guard against the future? Who will dare to say: why do you speak to us of penance, to us, who are neither priests nor religious? Was it to them that the holy precursor addressed himself? Was it to them that Jesus Christ said: “Unless you do penance, you shall all perish”? (Luke XIII, 3). Was the Gospel written only for a few? Is not its severity for all? St. Basil says: Will not God demand from all its exact observance? O blessed precursor, who dost fill thy office so worthily, exciting us to true penance by thy words and example, obtain for us the spirit and love of mortification; prepare the ways of Jesus Christ in us; and if we

are not so happy as to resemble thee in thy perfect innocence, obtain from Him by thy credit, that we may at least imitate thee in thy penance.

III. POINT.

“He was not the light, but he came to give testimony of the light” (John I, 7). As the dawn precedes and announces the sun, so St. John was the angel sent by God to walk before His face (Mal. III, 1). He was destined by Him to announce the coming of the Messiah and to make Him known to the world. He first discovered Him while still enclosed in his mother’s womb, where, feeling the presence of his Deliverer, he leaped for joy (Luke I, 41). In the desert and on the shores of the Jordan he pointed out the Lamb of God, he preached Him, and he baptized in order to prepare the people for His baptism; in his prison he sent disciples to our Lord (Mat. XI, 2); finally, St. John was only a voice to announce Jesus, his life was a living portrait of this divine Saviour; therefore he was mistaken for Jesus Himself, and he was obliged to declare that he was not the Christ, and this testimony which his humility rendered suspicious, was authorized by another St. John, who tells us that he was not the light. John the Baptist humbled himself to glorify Jesus, he abased himself to exalt Him, he despised himself to honor Him, he hid himself to manifest Him: he said: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John III, 30). “There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not; the same is He that shall come after me, who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose” (John I, 26, 27). He refers all to Jesus, his cares, his labors, his retreat, his silence and his words; he deprives himself of Jesus for Jesus’ sake; he knows no interests but those of Jesus. O two-fold

zeal of St. John, to annihilate himself, in order to establish the glory of Jesus! O great saint, in imitation of thee, why cannot I seek Him always, at the expense of all that is dear to me? Grant, Lord, that, by the intercession of St. John the Baptist, I may praise and glorify Thee, that I may love Thee even to hatred and contempt of myself.

St. Peter, Apostle, June 29th.

I. POINT.

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church."
(*Mat. XVI, 18.*)

To-day we celebrate the feast of St. Peter, whom our Lord Jesus Christ established as His Vicar on earth, as the Prince of the apostles and the Pastor of the universal Church. Let us consider the sublime virtues by which this apostle merited so august a character. It seems to have been given to him especially as the recompense of his faith, which was manifested so strikingly in his well known confession: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God", who art come into this world (Mat. XVI, 16). These words express equally the greatness of the eternal generation of the Word and the humiliations of His abasement in our flesh. The clear knowledge of these two fundamental truths produced in St. Peter a profound humility and an ardent love; the more he perceived greatness in Jesus, the more also he saw his own nothingness and recognized his own baseness, and the more he esteemed himself unworthy to approach Him; penetrated with this knowledge, he said: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke V, 8); this made him submit with so much pain to the humiliation of his Master washing his feet (John XIII, 6). Humility never left him, it

made him submissive to the reproof of St. Paul, and, although raised above him and above all men, by the pre-eminence of his dignity, he did not take offence at the holy liberty with which St. Paul disapproved of his conduct before all. A humility which has few parallels, and which condemns our pride. O great saint, thou art truly happy, since thou wast beatified by Him, who holds the happiness and the fate of our eternity in His hands. Thou art also happy, because by a living faith, animated by charity, thou didst follow and imitate Him so closely in His meekness, in His modesty and humility.

II. POINT.

“Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee” (Mat. XIX, 27). St. Peter’s love for Jesus was boundless; he loved Him with a love of preference, for he no sooner knew Him, than he abandoned all to attach himself to Him; he loved Him alone, he sought and desired nothing besides Him. He said: “Lord, to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John VI, 69). He loved Him tenderly and constantly, followed Him everywhere, even in His Passion; he hastened to His sepulchre (John XX, 3); as soon as he heard the voice of his sweet Master, he plunged into the sea (John XXI, 7) to reach Him sooner. He wept over his denial every day and every hour of his life, which he employed entirely for the glory of his God. Finally, he repeated three times the protestation of his love, and, sure of his own heart, he called to witness the divine knowledge which discovers and penetrates the inmost recesses of all hearts: “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee” (John XXI, 17). O Lord, may I be able to say the same to Thee, and as truly and as boldly as Thy apostle; may I love Thee as he did, not only in word, but in deed and in truth (1 John III, 18).

III. POINT.

“I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death” (Luke XXII, 33). The faith, the humility and the charity of St. Peter accompanied him even to death; he suffered with joy scourges, prison and chains; he went away filled with delight, says the Sacred Text, because he had the honor to endure opprobrium for the name of Jesus Christ (Acts V, 41); finally, He was crucified to bear testimony to the divinity of the Saviour, to seal his faith with his own blood. But through the humility which he always preserved, and which never permitted him for a single moment to forget the infinite distance between his Master and himself, he thought himself unworthy to die by the same kind of torture, and, to render his own still more infamous and cruel, he asked to be crucified with his head downwards; and this was granted him. He thus consummated his sacrifice, and made it a holocaust of faith, humility, penitence and love. O good Jesus, grant that I may love Thee, that I may follow Thee unto death, and at that perilous moment, may I, filled with confidence, say to Thee with Thy apostle: “Lord, save me”; and “bid me come to Thee” (Mat. XIV, 30, 28).

Commemoration of St. Paul, June 30th.

I. POINT.

“As My Father hath sent Me, I also send you.”
(John XX, 21.)

Jesus from all eternity proceeds from His Father, who sent Him in time: He Himself afterwards sent His apostles, whom He had elected before all ages. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you” (John XV, 16). The mission of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul was not limited to place or nations or persons;

it was general and universal: "Go teach all nations, preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mat. XXVIII, 19). Although these words are addressed to all the apostles, they apply especially to these two, and we have every right to call them our Fathers, because they are the Founders, or rather the foundations and the supports of the Church after Jesus Christ. They are His ministers, His angels and the dispensers of His mysteries. St. Paul says: "We are the ambassadors of Christ" (1 Cor. IV, 1). They speak, they act, they treat in His name, by His virtue; they represent His Person. How high, how exalted are these qualities! How divine are these functions! To hold the place of Jesus, to be clothed with His authority, to complete in the Church what was wanting to His sufferings! Therefore He said to them: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke X, 16). They are the mediators between Jesus and our souls; they labor for our sanctification, they lead us to Jesus and to follow His example; they refer all to the glory of Him who sent them: two excellent ends, which we ought to propose to ourselves during our whole life, the glory of Jesus and our own sanctification. O divine love, fire from heaven, which Jesus came to bring upon earth to make it burn in our hearts, and which these two saints took such care to kindle! O holy apostles, preserve the Church which you founded, increase and extend the faith which you planted; carry everywhere this heavenly fire with which you were animated. All that you did on earth by your labors and your preaching, do now in heaven by the efficacy of your intercession.

II. POINT.

"This man is to Me a vessel of election to carry My name before the gentiles and kings" (Acts IX, 15).

St. Paul corresponded very faithfully to his high vocation. From the moment of his conversion he gave himself without reserve to our Lord, and by the words, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts IX, 6), he abandoned himself entirely to Him, and gave Him the right to dispose of his life, his talents, his heart, his mind and all his actions; as he explained in the sequel: "When it pleased God to call me by His grace, . . . I condescended not to flesh and blood" (Gal. I, 15, 16), that is, I did not follow my own judgment, or my inclinations, I did not seek my own interest, I submitted myself entirely to the spirit and grace of Jesus. What did he not do afterwards, to preserve this grace, to make it fruitful, in a word, to perfect it? Thus he expresses himself: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace hath not been void in me" (1 Cor. XV, 10). Grace is never idle, it does great things always and continually in well disposed souls; therefore this great saint said: I have labored and suffered more than all the other apostles (1 Cor. XV, 10); "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. IV, 7). I have corresponded to grace to its full extent, and I have reached the measure of my divine vocation. Oh! how important is fidelity to the first motion of grace, since on it depend the progress of our life and our eternity. If St. Paul had neglected his first grace, or if he had been satisfied to be merely a Christian, without corresponding to his vocation, to the apostleship, probably he would have been neither a Christian, nor an apostle, nor even among the number of the elect. If we refuse to aspire and to labor for the perfection to which God calls us, we risk our salvation. For many souls this should be a great cause of fear and trembling!

III. POINT.

“As to the rest there is a crown of justice laid up for me” (2 Tim. IV, 8). Thus he may speak who, in imitation of his Master, has fulfilled all justice (Mat. III, 15). With what justice, with what excellent virtues was not the life of St. Paul adorned! How great his meekness, his purity, his poverty, his labors, his penance, his patience! What trials, what sufferings, what pains, what afflictions did he not endure! These words of Christ were verified in him: “I will show him how much he must suffer for My Name” (Acts IX, 16). His humility was in proportion to the sublimity of his virtues, and was their foundation. He did not conceal his weaknesses, he considered himself “the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. I, 15), the least of the apostles, judging himself unworthy to bear the name; he attributed all that he did, the wonderful success of his apostolic labors, entirely to the grace of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. XV, 9). Finally, all his virtues receive new splendor from the ardent charity which animated them. He appears to us inflamed with it and transported out of himself. He says: “I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. II, 20). I have an inexpressible desire to die, “to be with Christ” (Philip. I, 23). What are these words but flames, or burning darts of holy love? He preached only Jesus, he spoke only of Jesus, he repeated His holy Name more than four hundred times in his epistles, and after his head had been separated from his body, he pronounced it three times (St. Chrysostom). He burned with zeal, first, for the glory of God, and then for the salvation of souls, for whom he even desired to be anathema (Rom. IX, 3). Consumed in the furnace of this twofold charity, he ended his life by martyrdom. O blessed apostle of the Gen-

tiles, may I not be excluded from thy charitable care, from thy apostolic vigilance! May thy zeal extend even to me, and may thy holy instructions penetrate my heart and inflame it with the same love which consumed thine!

Visitation of Our Lady, July 2nd.

I. POINT.

“Mary rising up went with haste into the hill country.”
(*Luke I, 39.*)

The grace of the Holy Ghost does not suffer delay. Blessed is he who, like Mary, follows the light and corresponds to its first movements (St. Ambrose). It will lead him to the mountains, that is, to the highest summit of perfection. It will make his feet light “like the feet of harts” (Ps. XVII, 34), according to the expression of the psalmist, to run with joy in the way of the commandments of the Lord, without growing weary (Ps. CXVIII, 5). Mary had no sooner conceived Jesus Christ, than she rose. If we have conceived Him spiritually by grace, receiving Him really in the Blessed Eucharist, we shall rise promptly, we shall rise above ourselves, our passions and our evil habits, to pass from an earthly life to a life spiritual and heavenly. This is the Bread which came down from heaven (John VI, 33); it rises always to heaven as towards its centre. The mountains are the parts of the earth which are nearest to heaven; this divine food will enable us to aspire and attain to the holy mountains of angelical perfection. O most pure Virgin, grant that, following thee, we may happily reach them, to be presented by thee to the King of glory.

II. POINT.

When Mary entered Zachary’s house, Elizabeth exclaimed, full of admiration and respect: “As soon as

the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy" (Luke I, 44). Wherever Jesus entered, grace, blessing and the Holy Ghost accompanied Him. He entered into Mary's womb, and the Holy Ghost overshadowed her; carried by her to the house of Zachary, He poured favors on the infant, the father and the mother, and filled them with His own spirit; He entered Zachary's house, and salvation was given to his whole family; He entered the pharisee's house, and sanctified the sinner; He entered Martha's house, and raised her brother to life; finally, He descended into Limbo, and changed it into a paradise. Thus, when He enters into us by holy Communion, He changes our hearts, and always bestows some new grace. If the entrance of Mary, bearing Jesus within her, was so blessed, what must have been the effects of her presence during three months in the house of Elizabeth! What an increase of grace and sanctification did she produce in this holy family! The babe leaped for joy, as in former days David danced before the Ark (2 Kings VI, 5), which was, however, only a figure of Mary containing and bearing her God. John was sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit, by whom his mother prophesied, and knew the great mystery hidden in God before all ages (Col. I, 26). O powerful and efficacious entrance, presence and voice of Mary! O holy Virgin! May thy voice sound in my ears (Cant. II, 14), to thrill, to change and renew my heart, and may it be heard in the ears of thy Son, to obtain for me His grace and holy spirit.

III. POINT.

Elizabeth exclaimed: "Blessed art thou among women. . . . And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke I, 42, 43).

The Blessed Virgin, accustomed to humble herself, hears her praises without feeling any pride: her dignity as Mother of God had not prevented her from coming to seek her cousin and offer her services. The announcement of her greatness and exaltation, which she had kept hidden, makes her humble herself still more; she refers all to God, whose mercy has not disdained her lowliness; for this is what she means by these words: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke I, 46). Mary, as simple as she is exalted, sees her lowness opposed to the greatness of God; she praises and exalts Him as her God, her Lord and her Saviour: "My soul doth magnify the Lord", for He is my Sovereign and I am His servant; "my spirit hath rejoiced in God", because He hath regarded the nothingness of His creature; I bless my Saviour, because He hath abased Himself to my misery.—O humility of Mary, which continues in the midst of her greatness! O humility which is the express condemnation of the pride that urges us to exalt ourselves, notwithstanding our numerous imperfections! Teach us, O Blessed Virgin, to render to God what belongs to Him, and to know and despise ourselves.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, July 16th.

Devotion of the Scapular.

I. POINT.

Advantages of wearing the scapulars.

Very few devotions are as secure as that of the scapular. The scapular of Mount Carmel, among others, was approved by twenty-two Popes, and has numberless miracles in its favor. Besides this scapular there are four others that are almost as popular—those of the

Trinity, of the Passion, of the Seven Dolors and of the Immaculate Conception. These five scapulars, approved by the Church and enriched with many indulgences, render those who wear them, sharers in all the good works of their respective religious orders; they have, besides this, a special share in the communion of saints, in the suffrages of their fellow-wearers, and in the protection of the Blessed Virgin, for they are her privileged children. On the 16th of July, 1251, she appeared to Blessed Simon Stock, general of the Carmelites, saying to him: "Receive, my dear son, the scapular of thy order, as the mark of the privilege I have obtained for thee and for thy brethren of Carmel; he who dies piously clad in this habit, shall be preserved from the eternal flames. This scapular is a sign of salvation, a safeguard in dangers, a pledge of peace and special protection until the end of time." About seventy years later Mary appeared to Pope John XXII., promising to deliver from purgatory all the brethren of Carmel on the Saturday following their death. Where else can we find such promises and such advantages? This should induce us to wear the scapular, as the livery of the Queen of heaven, with respect, devotion and unalterable confidence.—O Mary, how happy and proud I feel in being clothed with thy holy habit! I will often invoke thee with the confidence of a loving child in his beloved Mother. Help me to derive spiritual profit from wearing thy scapulars, and to rely confidently on the promises thou didst make in favor of the brethren of Carmel.

II. POINT.

The devotion of the scapulars should contribute to our sanctification.

How powerful to make us live in a holy manner are these wholesome thoughts:—I am in the service of the

most powerful of queens, for I wear her livery, her scapular; Satan trembles before me, because I am a servant of her who crushed his head; why should I yet fear the world and remain the slave of human respect? How can I, who am a subject of the immaculate Queen, allow myself to be governed by my base passions? The scapular, her habit, which I wear, has made me her child; and should not the child of such a Mother become a saint?—The scapular of the Trinity reminds me of the words of St. Paul: “Ye are the temple of God.” The three divine Persons, then, dwell in me, watch over my soul, listen to my prayers. What a powerful motive of recollection and filial confidence!—The scapular of the Passion recalls to my mind the torments and opprobrium of the Man-God, and furnishes me with a touching motive to love Him and to suffer patiently.—The Mother of sorrows, in her turn, by clothing me with her livery, assures me of her protection in all my trials; and no other mother can so well as she console her children.—As to the scapular of the Immaculate Conception, it requires me to live in chastity, reserve and modesty, and constantly urges me to practise mortification, vigilance, prayer, those means so necessary to insure perfect purity.—Because of the signal favors promised to its wearers, the Mount Carmel scapular encourages me to hope to be preserved from hell, also from a long purgatory, and to be specially protected by the Blessed Virgin in all dangers. This should excite in my heart lively sentiments of faith, confidence, gratitude and love.—O my God, grant that I may consider each scapular as a sensible sign of Mary’s favor, and, in some manner, as one of the sails of the vessel of grace which is to bring me to the harbor of salvation. I am resolved always to wear the

scapulars with a profound respect, and to re-animate my confidence in Mary, especially when tempted, by the thought that I am clad, as with an armor of defence, with her livery.—She will overshadow thee with her shoulders, and under her wings thou shalt trust (Ps. XC, 4).

St. Vincent de Paul, July 19th.

I. POINT.

St. Vincent, model of divine love.

St. Vincent loved God with a perfect conformity of mind, heart, sentiments and conduct with the divine will. This conformity was the soul of his life. He would often speak of it, and this in such a manner as to make a deep impression on his hearers. In order to practise it perfectly, he was always disengaged from his own will and from every thing that was not in accordance with the good pleasure of God; he called this the practising of holy indifference. “A soul, endowed with this indifference”, he was wont to say, “resembles the angels in three ways; first, she walks in the presence of God; secondly, she is always ready to do the divine will, and thirdly, she prefers the meanest employments to the most exalted.” He practised what he said, accomplishing all his duties in a spirit of recollection, seeking to please God alone, in whose presence he labored with respect, confidence and love. Esteeming himself the last of all, he strove to render to others the most menial services, making himself, as he said, “as the beast of burden, ready to do all that is required, when and as it is required.” Thus did St. Vincent testify his love to God. And what better proof can we have of our love for Him, unless we die to ourselves and to all that is not the sovereign Good? “Do we not”,

says our saint, "feel so deeply hurt by a mere nothing, a fancied slight, a want of consideration, an unimportant refusal, and even the very thought that we are made light of, as not to be able to forget it? But holy indifference takes away from us all selfish desire, all resentment, and detaches us from ourselves and from all creatures." Are we animated with such dispositions, in order to belong wholly to God? Does not often a word, a slight pain, dryness in prayer, an impression of sadness and discouragement, suffice to rob us of our peace of mind, of our devotion, of submission to the Lord, and of all that true divine love requires of us?—O my God, how far I am from that perfection, which, according to St. Vincent, strips man of all self-will, and enables him, like the angels, to find all his happiness in Thy good pleasure! Grant me the strength henceforth to die to myself, to my own satisfactions, and to place my joy in the fulfilment of my duties, so that I may glorify Thy holy name and fully content Thy Heart. "I always do the things that please Him."

II. POINT.

St. Vincent, model of charity towards the neighbor.

The name of St. Vincent de Paul is synonymous with charity. Meek, kind, affable, he was always ready to receive everybody and to do good to all. "Nothing wins men's hearts", he would say, "so much as kindness and affability." He wrote to a bishop: "The Lord formerly armed heaven and earth against man; did He thereby convert him? Was He not obliged to abase and humble Himself before him, to induce him to accept His yoke? What God, notwithstanding His omnipotence, was unable to obtain, how can we expect to obtain, unless through kindness?" True to these max-

ims, he could not bear harshness in his missionaries. He acknowledged that he had thrice made severe reprimands, but without success, whilst all his kindest admonitions had always been crowned with success. His compassion towards the needy was admirable, for in them he beheld our Lord become poor for love of us. Every want, both spiritual and temporal, found in him a father full of boundless love and devotedness. Who can count the charitable works and institutions inspired and realized by his ardent charity? How many beggars clothed and provided for by his care! How many provinces fed in time of famine by his liberality! He founded asylums and hospitals, at one time for foundlings, at another for helpless old men and women, and again for the sick of every age and condition. "It is God Himself", he used to say, "who receives the gifts of our charity; and is it not an unequalled honor to be able to give Him that which belongs to Him, and which we have received from His bounty?" Being a faithful imitator of Jesus Christ, the saint practised charity so perfectly, as actually to love his enemies. The greater the harm they did or sought to do him, the greater also the benefits he bestowed on them. Do we also act thus? How great is not our repugnance to forgive an injury, an injustice, to bear with our neighbor's defects, to avoid detraction, and to refrain from speaking ill of those who do us harm!—O Jesus, O Mary, form in me a heart like unto that of St. Vincent, that is, a heart kind, meek, affable, forgetful of injuries, of slights, of wounded feelings; a heart compassionate for all kinds of misery, prompt in giving relief and obliging others, generous in bestowing help, in devotedness and self-sacrifice. "The fulness of the law is love."

St. Mary Magdalen, July 22nd.**I. POINT.**

“Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”

(Luke VII, 47.)

Magdalen was a sinner and recognized as such; but she had no sooner heard Jesus, than she changed her life and resolved to seek her salvation at His feet. The Sacred Text says: “When she knew” (Luke VII, 37); the moment she perceived her disease, and knew her Physician, she hastened to Him, followed the light, and co-operated with His grace promptly, perfectly and faithfully; like David, she said within herself: “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Kings XII, 13). She sought Him at the house of the pharisee without consulting worldly prudence. Human respect did not check her: she was ashamed only of her sins, and the salutary confusion with which they covered her, made her take her place behind at the feet of Jesus; she began her penance by the humiliation of her body and her heart,—an essential condition of true repentance,—and she added to it a sincere regret and lively sorrow, which she expressed by her silence and the abundant tears with which she washed the feet of her divine Master; then, wiping them with her hair, she kissed them with a tender respect, which showed the ardor of her love, and the reality of her conversion. Animated with a lively desire to avenge upon herself the offences she had committed against her God, she immolated to His glory all that she had used for the service of the world.—O good Jesus, humble me at Thy sacred feet, that I may weep over my offences and obtain pardon. O powerful grace of Jesus, which moves a sinner and changes her into a saint, which makes her love much,

that He may pardon all! Change my heart, draw it to Him, pierce it with compunction, sorrow and love.

II. POINT.

“Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, heard His word” (Luke X, 39). As the dove, “not finding where her foot might rest, returned into the ark” (Gen. VIII, 9), so Magdalen, unable to find repose in created things, retired into the sacred ark of the Heart of Jesus: there she finds her delight, there she dwells in profound forgetfulness of the world, of herself and of all that is not Jesus; she sees only Him, she hears only Him, she thinks only of Him, she knows and loves only Him. Wherever we see her, she is always at the feet of Jesus; there is her abode and her portion; at His divine feet her love and her holiness began; there they advanced to perfection; first, at the house of the pharisee, where, prostrate before her Saviour, she sheds a torrent of tears (John XII, 3); afterwards at the house of Martha, her sister, where she is attentive to His divine words (Luke X, 39); then at the house of Simon the leper, where she pours perfumes on His feet (Luke VII, 38); finally, on Calvary and at the sepulchre, where she adored her Jesus, dying and dead. O Jesus, tear me from the world and myself, and draw me to Thy adorable feet, to those feet wearied in seeking sinners, pierced with nails to wash my soul in the blood that flows from them; grant, I implore Thee, that I may remain there with Magdalen, that I may hear and love only Thee; that I may choose that better part, and that I may attach myself to it in such a manner, that it may never be taken from me, and amid the vanity of the changing events of this world my heart and my love may be fixed in Thee alone.

III. POINT.

“Mary hath chosen the best part” (Luke X, 42). Magdalen, having chosen Jesus for her portion, loved Him constantly while He lived, and as ardently after His death. Led by His spirit, she went to a frightful desert, separated from all human intercourse, to be more closely united to Him. Possessed by this pure love, she would no longer see created things, and began a perpetual exercise of penance in a solitude, which was for her a purgatory of love and a continuation of the martyrdom which she had first endured on Calvary; for it was there that, by her deep compassion for the sufferings of Jesus, in whom she lived more than in herself, she became more than a martyr, and did not cease to suffer, till having spent thirty years languishing with sorrow and love in the absence of her Beloved, she at last went to enjoy His blessed presence in heaven. There she reaps the fruit of her labors, of her penance, of her long and hard privation of Jesus; there she said with His faithful servant St. Bernard: I have found Him whom I sought, I see Him whom I desired, I possess Him whom I love; and with the Spouse: “I have sought Him, I have found Him, I hold Him, and I will never let Him go” (Cant. III, 4). “He is mine, and I am His” for all eternity (Cant. II, 16). O Jesus, may I imitate the love and penance of Thy holy lover, that, with her and through her intercession, I may one day possess Thee in heaven, there to love Thee with that pure and unchanging love which will never end.

St. James the Greater, Apostle, July 25th.

I. POINT.

“*Jesus called them*” (Mat. IV, 21).

The first excellence of St. James appears in his admirable vocation; for, at the first word of Jesus, he

and his brother, St. John, leaving their boat, their nets, even their father, in a word, all things, followed Him. St. John was distinguished by the august character of the disciple whom Jesus loved. St. James was favored with a special familiarity with his good Master, who always chose him to be the witness of His most hidden mysteries and of His most secret actions. This appeared on Thabor and in the Garden of Olives. O goodness and power of Jesus, who gently insinuates Himself into us by His words, and who attracts us powerfully to Himself by His grace! This choice, preference and predilection of Jesus are a sublime and most glorious eulogy of our saint! "Blessed, O Lord, is he, whom Thou hast chosen and taken into Thy service" (Ps. LXIV, 5); whom Thou hast separated from the multitude, to render Thyself the only object of his love! But more blessed is he, who, favored by this grace, recognizes it, profits by it, and corresponds to it.

II. POINT.

He named James and John, the sons of Zebedee, "Boanerges, which is the sons of thunder" (Mark III, 17). A second excellence of St. James was to receive with his brother, and like the Prince of the apostles, a new name; for Jesus, in imposing these names, bestowed a grace to fulfil their signification. Therefore, St. James obeyed promptly the powerful voice of Jesus, which was like a peal of thunder, and he himself made the whole world resound with the thunder of the evangelical preaching, called the voice of the Lord which breaks the highest cedars of Libanus (Ps. XXVIII, 3 and 5), that is, which confounds the powers of the world, converts monarchs and destroys the pride of empires. St. James carried the faith into Spain, and, as its defender and invincible shield, he terrified and

overthrew its enemies. Full of zeal and fervent love, he wished to avenge the insults offered to his Master by the Samaritans, by calling down fire from heaven upon them (Luke IX, 54); but he was checked by the clemency of Jesus, who desires mercy rather than sacrifice (Osee VI, 6). Urged and animated by His spirit, James, as a true son of thunder, carried another fire from heaven into the hearts of sinners, to terrify them profitably, and afterwards to convert them; to change them, and enkindle them with the pure flames of divine love. O great apostle, through thy intercession produce in me all these blessed effects!

III. POINT.

“Can you drink the chalice, that I shall drink?” (Mat. XX, 22). To these words of Jesus, addressed to St. James and St. John, they answered: “We can” (Mat. XX, 22); and truly they did drink the chalice of our Lord by participating in His labors and sufferings. St. James suffered martyrdom the first of all the apostles; and if he was among the first to follow Jesus in his life, he was also the first to follow Him in his death, so that he gave Him life for life, and blood for blood, and he was the protomartyr of the apostolic college, which he animated and strengthened by the example of his courage, and the greatest proof of love and fidelity which he could give to his Master, who said: “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John XV, 13). If St. Andrew was the first of the apostles in his vocation, St. Peter in authority, St. John in love: St. James was the first who suffered martyrdom, and this primacy in sufferings and death for Jesus is another excellence of this holy apostle. With him let us drink the chalice of Jesus, accepting the crosses, the trials, the afflictions

which it shall please Him to send us, and enduring them with patience and humility, with perfect resignation and submission, in loving union with His divine will.

St. Ann, July 26th.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field.” (Mat. XIII, 44.)

St. Ann was like a field, or a fertile soil, which brought forth fruits of grace and benediction. By her prayers she obtained a blessed fecundity; her womb became a sacred ark, in which God enclosed the riches of heaven, the happiness of earth, and the delight of the most Holy Trinity. What wonders were accomplished in her at the moment of the immaculate conception of Mary! This blessed mother of the purest of virgins, in conceiving her, acquired the privilege of being the true altar of perfumes and holocausts: for the Blessed Virgin began, from that moment, to offer to God the divine elevations of her soul as an incense of admirable odor, her life and all the uses of her body and her heart as sacrifices infinitely pleasing to God. St. Ann could then say what her holy daughter afterwards proclaimed in her Canticle: “He that is mighty, hath done great things to me” (Luke I, 49). In fact, by His power, He made a master-piece of grace in her: He made her the mother of Mary; this says all in one word. O great saint, mother of the Mother of God, deign to adopt us as thy children; help us to imitate thy virtues; obtain for us grace to practise those of thy incomparable Daughter, and to imitate her fidelity in corresponding to grace.

II. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field” (Mat. XIII, 44). Jesus is the precious

treasure of heaven and earth, a treasure of grace and glory, the treasure of the knowledge and wisdom of God (Col. II, 3). Mary is the field or the paradise in which this treasure is hidden, and St. Ann is the fertile earth of this heavenly paradise; or, if Jesus is the river which waters the city of God, Mary is the fountain from which it flows, and Ann is the living source of this fountain; finally, if Jesus is the flower, Mary is the stem which bore it, and St. Ann is the root. There is a mutual communication between Jesus, Mary and Ann: in the order of nature, St. Ann gives to Mary, and to Jesus through Mary; but in the spiritual and supernatural order, she receives all from Jesus through Mary. O Jesus, source of all holiness, grant that, like St. Ann and all who have the honor to belong to Thee in a more special manner, we may live hidden and unknown to the world and to ourselves, to live only in Thee and for Thee.

III. POINT.

“Blessed art thou among women”, because “blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Luke I, 42). These words addressed to the holy Virgin apply also to her blessed mother, but in a less eminent degree, for, if the goodness of a tree is known by its fruit (Mat. VII, 17), the cause by its effects, and the excellence of a workman by the beauty of his works, what must we think of the prerogatives, the graces, the virtues with which God, whose works are perfect, adorned St. Ann, to render her worthy of so close a union with Mary and Jesus, the adorable and blessed fruit of her womb. If the ancient patriarchs formerly received great privileges, because the Saviour of the world was to be born from them, what were the favors granted to St. Ann, who was so closely related to Him! As water is so much the purer

as it is nearer to its source; as the nearer natural things are to their centre, the more rapid in their motion, so St. Ann is so much the more eminent in all the virtues, and the more exalted in holiness, as she approaches nearer to Jesus: all the movements of her soul were directed to Him with rapidity as to their centre. O incomparable saint, offer me to Mary, give me to Jesus. Under thy protection and by thy suffrages, may I obtain His holy love! May I tend to Him, may I unite myself to Him, and may I repose in Him as in my centre forever!

St. Ignatius of Loyola, July 31st.

I. POINT.

“He began to do and to teach.”

(Acts I, 1.)

God having destined St. Ignatius to labor for the salvation of the neighbor, began by making him the model of a perfect conversion. Touched with keen regret for his early years given to the world, this saint was penetrated with the spirit of penance, which consists in hating and detesting sin above all things, as being more than all things opposed to God and His love. He began to destroy sin in himself and to arm himself with an ardent zeal, to avenge on his own person the offences committed against God; he ill-treated his body by the severest austerities, and punished his past vanity by a profound contempt of the world and of himself, a contempt which made him seek not only to be forgotten by men, but also to be despised by them, and, like the apostles, whose steps he was to follow, and whose ministry he was to continue, to suffer all kinds of opprobrium for the name of Jesus Christ (Acts V, 41). He said with the holy precursor: “He

must increase, and I must decrease" (John III, 30). Thus hating and humbling himself, he clothed himself with Jesus, and, like another Elias, merited to be filled with a burning zeal for the glory of the God of hosts, to increase His kingdom, and to win souls to Him. What did he not wish to do for the salvation of a single soul? What did he not do for the conversion of infidels to the faith, and of sinners to grace? He had an extreme compassion for them; and, in order to obtain from God their return to Him, he added new penances to his ordinary severities, as when in the depth of winter he plunged into the water up to his neck, to divert a voluptuous man from an evil design. By his words and his writings how powerfully did he excite to a horror of sin, to love of God, and zeal for His interests, referring all his actions to the greater glory of God. O divine zeal, O fervor of charity, O sacred fire, which Jesus came to bring upon earth (Luke XII, 49), and which his servant endeavored to kindle! Why do you not inflame, why do you not consume all our hearts?

II. POINT.

On whom shall my spirit rest, if not on him who is humble and who trembles in his heart? (Is. LXVI, 2). St. Ignatius, perfectly established in humility and penetrated with the fear of the Lord, received also the gift of a divine prudence, which, by a supernatural light, made him judge and discern all things, according to the words of eternal wisdom. Guided by it, he established his Society on solid foundations, and proportioned the means to the end with admirable foresight; hence the wise rules which he made, so suitable to the great variety of duties, of persons, of places and nations, who were to be united in perfect conformity of manners and conduct. He himself was clothed with strength and

invincible courage to conquer obstacles, to overcome difficulties, and to accomplish the work of the Lord with a patience equal to his zeal. Interiorly enlightened by God, and burning with love for Him in prayer, he inflamed others; and from this living source, from which he drew unceasingly, he poured forth abundantly of his fulness, never undertaking anything without having recourse to prayer, as of old, Moses had to the Tabernacle; therefore, from all parts of the world people addressed him, as a safe oracle, to be instructed in the will of God. This great saint, docile to the Holy Ghost, who inspired him, obedient to all His motions, was led by Him as by the hand; the Lord was with him in all that he undertook. As God said to David: "I have been with thee wheresoever thou hast walked" (2 Kings VII, 9); as He always accompanied Joseph, and made him succeed in everything (Gen. XXXIX, 2), so He was with His servant Ignatius and was his guide everywhere. O Jesus, lead us in the midst of our exterior occupations, and enable us always to act for Thy honor and Thy greater glory in time and in eternity.

III. POINT.

"Whither the impulse of the spirit was to go, thither they went" (Eze. I, 12). The Society of Jesus, established by St. Ignatius, may be compared to the chariot of Ezechiel, in which shone the glory and the majesty of God, and which was drawn by four mysterious animals, representing the dispositions with which the zealous disciples of this saint do not cease to spread, with inconceivable rapidity, the knowledge and love of God throughout the known world. The first disposition, expressed by the face of the eagle, and which is especially applicable to this holy Order, which has been commanded to follow the doctrine of St. Thomas, the

angelic Doctor, is science, and, above all, the science of salvation, to dissipate the darkness of sin, of error and ignorance: for this it must labor unceasingly, by writing, teaching and preaching for the greater glory of God. O Jesus, our true light, elevate us, not to the knowledge which puffs up, but to that of Thy love which edifies; for in this consists eternal life, to know Thee and love Thee (John XVII, 3). The second disposition, represented by the face of the ox, an animal laborious and patient, is humble, prompt and courageous obedience, which this Society vows, and which especially characterizes its spirit. O perfect holocaust that immolates all to God, body, mind and heart, and is more acceptable to Him than all sacrifices (1 Kings XV, 22). Give me, Lord, this submissive will, that I may accomplish all Thine, and allow myself to be guided by Thy hand, as the pen by the hand of the writer (Ps. XLIV, 2).—The face of the man represents the third disposition of grace, of zeal and charity to serve the neighbor, to raise him up and lead him to God, the object and principal end of the Institute, which professes to spread everywhere, without distinction of age or quality, the principles of Christianity and of the love of God.—The face of the lion expresses the strength given to conquer the devil and temptations, to destroy sin, to overcome evil habits, to combat self-love, to deliver souls from its bondage in order to give them to Jesus Christ and to establish in them the sovereign reign of His love. This virtue and power of the spirit of God, with which St. Paul said that he spoke and preached the Gospel, were given to St. Ignatius, and by him to his faithful disciples, and we ought to ask him to communicate them to us, that we may save ourselves, and aid in the salvation of our brethren, at least

by our prayers and our good example. Lord, give these holy dispositions to all the ministers of Thy Church, that, forgetting themselves, they may labor unceasingly for Thy glory.

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, August 2nd.

His conformity to the divine will.

I. POINT.

St. Alphonsus always acted in accordance with the divine will.

St. Alphonsus so highly esteemed the will of God, as to prefer it to the most singular graces. "O will of my God", he was wont to exclaim, "how dear art thou to me! Thou art always all holy, all good, all beautiful, all perfect, all amiable! What pleases thee, pleases me; may thy desires be mine also! I wish to live always and to die intimately united to thee. I love thee as much as I love God, since thou art God Himself." A single act of perfect conformity to the divine will would suffice to sanctify a soul, he would say, as it happened to St. Paul on the road to Damascus. The whole conduct of St. Alphonsus agreed with these sentiments. No one was more docile or more obedient than he. He was a model of regularity, observing even the least important rules, and, although himself the higher superior, he would ask permissions, as if he were a mere subject. "Nothing is little", he would say, "when there is question of accomplishing the divine command. St. Teresa would have given her life for the least ceremony of the Church." His sole aim in all his actions was to please God, and he often besought Him to dispose of him without regard to his inclinations. With what respect, with what attention he listened interiorly to the voice of the Holy Ghost, in order to obey Him in all things! Do we act in like manner? Do we bend our judgment

and our will to all the Lord's desires? Do we not sometimes need a positive order, in order to yield obedience? Do we not frequently prefer our own views, our whims to the will of the Holy Ghost? O my God, by the merits of St. Alphonsus, Thy faithful servant, grant that I may always seek solely Thy good pleasure in all my actions. Make me prompt, punctual, generous and courageous in the exercise of obedience. I propose to live incessantly under Thy dependence, and to choose Thy amiable will as the breath and food of my soul, so that I may be able to say with Jesus: "My food is to do the will of Him that sent me."

II. POINT.

St. Alphonsus suffered in union with the divine will.

How many trials had not our saint to undergo during his long life! Hardly had he founded his Congregation amid great human opposition and contradictions, than he saw it several times on the verge of being swamped by persecution. But never did he lose courage, or allow sadness and dejection to alter his resignation. To these trials were added frequent intense bodily pains, some of which reduced him to death's door, or rendered him almost helpless, and yet did not prevent him from continuing his labors for the glory of God and the welfare of the Church and of souls. During the seventeen years of an acute rheumatism, which caused him intense suffering and rendered him deformed, he was never heard to utter the least complaint. "O Lord", he would then often say, "if Thou wilt to prolong this pain forever, behold me ready to acquiesce in Thy holy will." When his wants were not properly attended to in his infirmities, he never evinced any dissatisfaction nor asked for any relief, but contented himself with saying: "All that God wills, is good; he that wills God

only, is always contented.”—“When I last saw him,” relates a priest, “I was astonished at the intensity of his sufferings. I heard him thank God for his trials. He made acts of self-offering, declaring himself ready to endure still greater pains, if such were the will of God. I was edified and moved at the sight of his heroic and invincible patience.”—Why do we so greatly fear contradictions and afflictions? Is it not, says St. Alphonsus, because we fail to consider their advantages? We forget the benefits they will bring us, if we bear them patiently. Suffering purifies us, affords us the occasion of practising many virtues, and enriches us with precious merits for eternity.—O Jesus crucified, O Mary, Mother of sorrows, through the intercession of Alphonsus, your devoted servant, enable me henceforth to consider every trial and every suffering as a gift from heaven, a means of expiating my sins, as a sign of forgiveness and love on your part, and a pledge of perseverance and salvation. Grant me calm and resignation in all the crosses and bitterness of this life. May I, like St. Alphonsus, ever take the divine will as the sole rule of my conduct and as a motive of patience in tribulation.

St. Dominic, August 4th.

I. POINT.

*Thou hast protected me from my mother's womb, and Thou
hast been my powerful aid. (Ps. LXX, 6).*

These words are marvelously applicable to St. Dominic, because of the purity of his soul and body. He was chosen by God, and received great graces in his most tender youth: there is not even a doubt that he preserved his baptismal innocence, as appears from the history of his life. In it we learn that St. Dominic,

being at the point of death, confessed to his religious, that God by His mercy had preserved his virginal integrity up to that very moment. O wonderful innocence and holiness! O virginity, friend of the angels! These are two virtues which prepare a worthy habitation for the Holy Ghost, and elevate the soul to the contemplation of the greatness of God and to union with Him, according to the words of the Saviour: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Mat: V, 8). The love of our saint for the Most High was so great, that he burned with an ardent desire to endure martyrdom by a slow and cruel death; to supply for it, he joined the rigor of penance, the guardian of chastity, to assiduity in prayer, which sanctifies and perfects it: by the one he crucified his flesh, and made it a victim immolated to Jesus Christ crucified; by the other he lifted up his spirit and united it to God; he died to himself, in order to live to God; he renounced himself, in order to live to his divine Master; he stripped himself of the old man, to clothe himself with the new, and he thus accomplished the two duties of Christian justice, turning away from evil and doing good; he could say with David: Let my prayer ascend to Thee, O Lord, as the smoke of incense (Ps. CXL, 2); for, as incense is consumed while diffusing an agreeable odor, so prayer, inflamed by the fire of charity, lifts up the soul by mortifying and consuming the flesh. His austerities were continual and incredible; three times a day, and as often in the night, he scourged his body with bloody disciplines; for him fasts were festivals, sufferings were delights, labors and watchings were ordinary exercises. After the example of our Lord, he spent the days in preaching and the nights in prayer; therefore his prayer was so efficacious, that he never

asked anything of God without obtaining it. O great saint, who didst so admirably join penance with the most perfect innocence, obtain for us the spirit of prayer and penance.

II. POINT.

“I am become as a wonder unto many, because Thou art a strong helper” (Ps. LXX, 7). The love of God which consumed the heart of St. Dominic, inspired him with a burning and boundless zeal for the salvation of the neighbor: we may say that, in this respect, he has scarcely had an equal. What unheard of labors did he not bear, what abundant tears did he not shed constantly for the sins of others. He wept, he sighed, he chastised himself to expiate them, as if they had been his own. With what ardor, with what burning desires did not God inflame his soul; he wished that all men, even the damned if possible, could know, love and bless God; therefore he received from Him, at the same time, the gift to move hearts, to inspire compunction in sinners, to convince, to confound and to convert heretics. The history of St. Dominic relates what seems to surpass all belief, that he and his companions converted one hundred thousand heretics to the Catholic faith, as much by continual prayer and the holiness of their exemplary life, as by their learned preaching. The life and eulogy of the Blessed Mother of God, whose worship he marvelously spread, were often the subject of his discourses, and, by a miraculous effect of his meditations, they were followed by numerous conversions. O incomparable Virgin, grant by thy goodness, that our conversion may be the fruit of the honor which we render to-day to this thy faithful and zealous servant, who labored during his whole life to extend and establish a true devotion to thee.

III. POINT.

As the tree is known by its fruit (Mat. XII, 33), and the skill of the architect by the perfection of the buildings which he erects, we may judge of the eminence of the grace and the fulness of the divine spirit, which were communicated to St. Dominic, by the institution of his Order, a celebrated Order which has produced many thousands of saints, and which has been the school of martyrs, doctors, confessors and virgins, who, by their distinguished virtues, have instructed and illustrated the Church. This great saint placed as the foundation of his Order humility and evangelical poverty, which he practised rigorously himself, renouncing all temporal goods, begging his bread from door to door, and enduring contempt and rebuffs, the ordinary portion of the poor. He avoided places where he was known and honored, and was pleased where he was most despised; he despised himself to such a degree that he often implored God, that his unworthiness and his great sins might not call down the avenging justice upon men. But God, who is pleased to exalt the humble, made him famous in proportion as he abased himself, imparting marvelous success to his undertakings, and making his disciples as so many brilliant stars, who, according to the intention of their holy Founder, have enlightened the Church, praising and blessing God, preaching His name and announcing His word throughout the whole world, laboring indefatigably to increase the knowledge and love of his heavenly Master and the salvation of souls. O great saint, obtain by thy prayers, that blessing God for the progress of thy children and the fruits of benediction which thou hast produced by them, we may imitate thy virtues, in order to share in thy glory and thy happiness in heaven.

Transfiguration of our Lord, August 6th.**I. POINT.**

“He was transfigured before them” (Mat. XVII, 2).

The sacred humanity of Jesus, being inseparably united to the divinity, and His body to a soul always blessed, the splendor of His glory must burst forth unceasingly, the effects of His hidden divinity must manifest themselves, the glory of His soul must gleam on His body, and it appeared suitable to the state and the greatness of Jesus, that He should be born and live impassible, immortal, glorious, and that the divinity should display its majesty in the body to which it was united; but Jesus, who wished to teach us humility, who chose to render Himself in all things, “sin only excepted” (Heb. II, 17), similar to those whom He adopted for His brethren, who wished, by the most incomprehensible charity, to be passible, in order to suffer for us, chose to suspend and check the supernatural effects of His divinity. The apostle says: “Having joy set before Him, He endured the shame” (Heb. XII, 2); the enjoyment of His divine glory being offered to Him, He voluntarily restrained and veiled it under the obscurity of His flesh, which He chose, by a miracle of humility and love, to render meek and passible, weak and mortal, in order to merit for us by another miracle, that our weak and sinful flesh should become capable of participating in His glory, and of being clothed with His immortality. O Jesus, who for love of us dost do a holy violence to nature, to grace, to glory, what efforts ought not we to make over ourselves, our passions, our vicious inclinations, to subject them to Thee? Ought we not to honor Thy privations by detaching ourselves, for Thy sake, from the vain pleasures and fleeting joys of this world?

II. POINT.

“He was transfigured before them.” Jesus, who concealed His glory, to accommodate Himself to our weakness, to give us an example of an humble and retired life, and, above all, to become a victim for us, on this day reveals to us some rays of His glory. His intention is to encourage us, to strengthen and to animate us to the combat by a foretaste of the recompense which He offers. Jesus was three hours on the Cross on Calvary, and He lived thirty-three years in humiliations and sufferings on earth; but He showed His glory on Thabor only for a few moments, allowing only a gleam of His splendor to appear, and immediately hiding it from the eyes of men, covering it again under the clouds of His laborious and mortal life. Thus He wished to teach us that the glory, which He promises us, is only for those who have humbled and hidden themselves with Him; that the recompense will be given only to those who have labored faithfully; that this earth is not the place of our repose and our beatitude: therefore the evangelist who records these words of St. Peter, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make here three tabernacles”, adds that “he knew not what he said” (Mark IX, 4). O Jesus, make me conformed to Thee now, in Thy humiliations and abasement, that I may one day share Thy eternal splendor.

III. POINT.

“They saw only Jesus” (Mat. XVII, 8). The Transfiguration of Jesus should produce in us a spiritual transfiguration, a salutary change. If the splendor of the glory, which it presents to our eyes, opens them to all the privations and all the abasements which He endured for us, how greatly should they excite our love and gratitude! If this glimpse of glory, shown to our

faith, makes us consider that which awaits us in heaven, what remains to us here below, but henceforth to see, relish and love only Jesus, in order to merit that He may call us and finally admit us to contemplate Him and love Him unchangingly and eternally in the abode of His glory, in the fulness of His light. But if these are the proper effects of the Transfiguration of Jesus, what should be produced in us by another transfiguration which He makes every day for our sake, in the Blessed Eucharist? There He transforms Himself entirely into love, in order to transfigure and change us entirely into Himself. Love abases Jesus in the hands of sinners, love annihilates Him under the species of a Host, love renders Him obedient to the word of the priest, love conceals Him from our eyes, takes Him captive and makes Him prisoner with us; love gives Him to us to attract and captivate our hearts, to transform them into Himself, by rendering them meek, patient, humble, obedient, charitable, like Himself. O Jesus, give me grace, I beseech Thee, to love Thee as I am loved by Thee, and henceforth to love only Thee on earth; grant that all my care may be to conform myself perfectly and entirely to Thee by a faithful and continual imitation of all Thy virtues.

St. Laurence, Martyr, August 10th.

I. POINT.

“He was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”
(Acts VI, 3.)

The Church honors two holy levites, one at Jerusalem, the other at Rome, between whom there is found so marvelous a resemblance in courage, in virtue and holiness, that the eulogy of the one may be justly applied to the other. St. Laurence truly appeared “full

of faith and of the Holy Ghost", by his ardent love for Jesus Christ. This fulness of faith and of the Holy Ghost was his peculiar characteristic. By his love and his faith, animated by the secret inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he stripped himself of all the goods of this world; by his love, stronger than death, he despised tortures; by the sacred fire of the Holy Ghost, with which he was filled, he seemed insensible to the flames that burned his body; finally, he aspired only to Jesus Christ, he sighed only for Him. O divine fire which burned St. Laurence more intensely within, than the flames by which he was surrounded burned him without! O fire of the Holy Ghost, more powerful than that which was kindled by the executioners! O Divine Spirit! Burn, inflame, consume my heart with the fire of Thy holy love; extinguish the flames of my vices, as Thou didst enable St. Laurence to conquer those of the material fire.

II. POINT.

"He was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." St. Laurence, as a bright star in the firmament of the Church, shone with every virtue; this merited for him the reward and the crown of martyrdom. Detachment from earth and all perishable things, and mercy, were especially conspicuous in him: therefore the Church applies to him this verse of the psalm: "He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth for ever and ever" (Ps. CXI, 9). He called the poor the treasures of Jesus Christ, and he distributed to them all the goods of the Church, that he might ascend more easily to our Lord, without anything weighing him down, or detaining him on earth, and that God might be his only treasure. He had an insatiable ardor for suffering; and this made him sigh continually for

martyrdom. Seeing his holy Pontiff Sixtus led to torture and death, he exclaimed: Father, where art thou going without thy son? O holy priest, whither art thou hastening without thy deacon? Leave me not behind, for I have distributed the treasures which thou gavest me; why wouldst thou deprive me of the honor of shedding my blood with thine, since thou hast chosen to confide to me the distribution of the blood of Jesus Christ? O words of fire! worthy of him, who, detached from all, showed his love by his works: like him, let us love, not only in word, but in deed and in truth.

III. POINT.

“He was full of grace and fortitude” (Acts VI, 8). Grace triumphed in St. Laurence by the marvelous fortitude, which it communicated to him in the midst of the slowest and most cruel of tortures; frightful as was his martyrdom, he endured it not only with generous constancy, but also with holy joy, and a delight which the presence and grace of the Holy Ghost alone could produce in him; he smiled at his sufferings, and, bound upon a burning gridiron, he laughed at the tyrant and said to him: I am roasted enough on this side, turn me over and eat. The holy Fathers attribute the invincible firmness of this holy martyr to the good use which he had made of the Blessed Eucharist, and they were not afraid to say that the chalice of the Blood of Jesus Christ, as a sacred and heavenly wine, had so transported his spirit with a divine inebriation, that he neither dreaded nor felt his tortures. Thus St. Cyprian, during the persecution of the Church, mitigated the severity of his laws in favor of penitents, and granted them a participation in the Body of Jesus Christ, as a salutary weapon to combat and vanquish their persecutors, and to win the crown of martyrdom. He said:

No one can be prepared to endure martyrdom, unless he receives from the Church the weapons which he must use in this combat. He adds: The soul is weak and languid, if not lifted up and inflamed by the reception of the holy mysteries. Let us approach the sacred Table often and worthily, there to clothe ourselves with strength against our invisible enemies, to sustain, by the virtue of the Holy Eucharist, the martyrdom of the Christian life, a martyrdom which engages us to combat unceasingly, and always to conquer the devil, his temptations, our passions and our evil habits. Jesus Christ will conquer in us and for us; He will render the labor easy, His yoke light, His service lovable, if we go to Him with confidence and love. St. Francis de Sales says: Condemned Christians will receive a great reproach on the day of judgment, because, having had at their disposal the fruit of life, they have allowed themselves to fall into the abyss of death.

St. Clare, August 12th.

I. POINT.

“The Lord will give goodness, and our land shall yield its fruit.” (Ps. LXXXIV, 13.)

St. Clare was a fruit of grace and benediction. Her mother was called Hortolana, and, no doubt, it was not without a mystery that this name, which signifies a flower-stand, was given to her, who had been destined by God to present to the world, in the person of her blessed daughter, a rich and fruitful plant, which was to bear so many and such admirable fruits of grace. If the Church is a delightful garden, or a paradise of heavenly pleasures on earth, the saints are plants or trees which God has placed therein, as in the ancient terrestrial paradise. But with what care and love did

the divine Gardener cultivate this plant, this pure virgin, who, on her side, allowed Him to labor in her, corresponding to His grace by humble submission, perfect dependence and boundless love. She obeyed the will of God most punctually; she studied and sought to satisfy Him in all things, desiring absolutely nothing but to please Him: therefore the heavenly Spouse of our souls, who makes it "His delight to be with the children of men" (Prov. VIII, 3), and who asks only their heart, delighted in the heart of Clare. He loaded her with His favors, and communicated Himself to her tenderly and intimately. O blessed union of the grace of God with our faithful correspondence! Let us admire it, but, above all, let us imitate it in this saint, to whom we may justly apply this verse of the psalm: "The Lord will give goodness, and our land shall yield its fruit."

II. POINT.

St. Clare was thus named, in consequence of a divine revelation which made known to her pious mother, while she still bore her in her womb, that her daughter would be a light which should enlighten the world. This began to appear marvelously, when, burning with the love of God, because of the exhortations of St. Francis, she left her relatives, her home, her possessions and all her worldly hopes, to embrace the poverty of Jesus Christ, and establish her holy Order on that foundation. Soon she kindled everywhere the holy fire of divine love, which, rising gradually, became so great a conflagration, that it spread through all parts of the country in which she lived; she excited so great a fervor by the incredible austerity of her penance, joined to the purity and holiness of her life, that she attracted a great number of ladies, who associated themselves with her, to live as angels under a human form.

Monasteries were constructed in all the cities, to which they retired, striving to rival each other in following their holy Mother, who was in the midst of them as a lighted torch, to guide them in the way to heaven by the example of her eminent virtues. She made a vow of obedience to St. Francis; and having by his command, contrary to her own wishes, accepted the office of Abbess, she regarded this dignity as a bondage, which should abase her beneath all, appointing her the servant of the servants of God. Therefore, she was conspicuous only by a more profound humility, rendering the lowest services to her sisters. Her life was a continual mortification: in all her severe penances and austerities her soul enjoyed a profound peace, which made her lovable, gracious and easy of access. She was so devoted to holy poverty, that she distributed to the poor a great fortune which she had inherited, without reserving anything for herself, as she wished to possess only Jesus, her treasure and her riches; and she inspired the same spirit in her daughters. She asked and obtained, that her monasteries should be established without other endowment or revenues, than those which Providence should send them in the charity and the alms of the faithful; and the Pope, wishing to dispense her from this her vow, she constantly refused, saying that she could not bear to be dispensed from closely following and imitating Jesus Christ. God many a time blessed her zeal in this by miraculously multiplying bread and oil for the support of her communities. O great saint, obtain for us that, animated by thy example, we may detach ourselves from the love of created goods and from all earthly pleasures, to seek and desire with fervor only those of heaven.

III. POINT.

St. Clare drew from God all that she gave to others. Her union with Him was intimate and perfect, her prayer assiduous and fervent: often she spent the nights prostrate on the ground, bedewing it with her tears, whilst her spirit and her heart were lifted up into heaven. The devil, jealous of her virtue, said to her one day that, if she continued to weep, she would become blind. He will not be blind who shall see God, was her answer. She went from her prayer like Moses, her countenance resplendent, and her words like so many burning darts which spread the love of God everywhere. She had a tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which she approached with humble fear, and a love full of reverence. It was her resource in all her doubts, her consolation in her trials, and her only joy and delight. By the virtue of this august Sacrament, she drove the Saracens from the city of Assisi, and even prevented them from entering her monastery. She said to our hidden God: Deliver not to these ferocious beasts the souls of those who are occupied in praising Thee, and do not abandon Thy servants, whom I have brought up in Thy holy love, deliver them not into the hands of the barbarians. I beseech Thee, to keep them at this hour under the shadow of Thy wings. The power of the prayer of this humble soul, and the power of the living God, terrified the barbarians and put them to flight. She had a special attraction to honor Jesus Christ in His Passion; she could not think of it without melting into tears, and she found relief and repose only in sharing the sorrows and even the sufferings of her divine Redeemer. When dying, she said: No trial has been painful to me, no pain severe, no affliction or infirmity has seemed to me too hard,

since I have studied and known Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor. II, 2). O precious death, which crowned so beautiful a life! Blessed passage through this world of this wise virgin, who left earth only to enjoy the wedding feast of the Lamb. Let us die to the world and to ourselves, let us suffer with St. Clare, that, like her, we may pass from the Cross to glory, and from the transitory sufferings of this life to eternal happiness.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, August 15th.

I. POINT.

“We are buried together with Jesus Christ by baptism, into death” (Rom. VI, 4).

Having been regenerated in Jesus Christ by baptism, we have all become His children. The Blessed Virgin possessed this character in an eminent degree. She became, in a special manner, the daughter of Jesus Christ, when, regarding her as His future Mother, He presented her with the benedictions of His sweetness (Ps. XX, 4), and sanctified her in the first moment of her conception. But in order to receive the fulness of her perfection and happiness, the necessity of dying was imposed upon her as upon all Christians, according to the teaching of St. Paul: We must be grafted in Him by the likeness of His death, to be so afterwards by the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. VI, 5). Mary died, not as the daughter of Adam, but as the daughter of Jesus Christ, conceived in grace by the virtue of His death, and also as Mother of Jesus, by the perfect conformity, which her divine maternity established between Jesus and herself; for as formerly, although exempt from the law of the purification and the other legal obligations, she had, nevertheless, subjected herself to them, because her Son, though above the law, had

chosen to submit to it: thus, she was to be conformed to Him by enduring death, to honor that which He endured for us. Let us say, that this same death of Jesus was the sword which, after having pierced the soul of Mary, separated it from her body, by the long martyrdom of sorrow and love, which finally consumed her life. But we, sinners, condemned to death, because it is the wages of sin (Rom. VI, 23), must learn to make it a voluntary sacrifice, accepting it freely, in order to render homage to that of Jesus and Mary, by dying every day to sin. O Blessed Virgin, preside over my death, that it may re-unite me to Jesus, and that it may be sanctified by the merits of His death and thine.

II. POINT.

“Tell my beloved that I languish with love” (Cant. V, 8). The Blessed Virgin, never having sinned, was not subject to the irregularities of the passions, to the maladies which are their consequence and their penalty, and which finally cause the separation of the soul from the body: only the excess of her love caused her death. O consummation of love! O power of the divine charity in Mary! All the saints have died in the habit of the love of God, some in the act of this love, but very few have died by the wound, or the sweet violence of divine love: it was reserved for Mary, in a most perfect and special manner, to die in actual love, in the exercise of love, and through divine love itself. O incomparable Virgin! Who will not desire, who will not long to die by the same death, or at least to have in death some resemblance to thine! But to obtain this blessing, this final grace, we must imitate thee in thy life; we must live in love, act by love, and abandon ourselves without reserve to the power of this holy love: obtain for us this grace from thy dear Son.

III. POINT.

“Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved?” (Cant. III, 6, and VIII, 5). The soul of the Blessed Virgin, when leaving her body, was received with incredible delight, by all the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, and by Jesus Christ, her Son, our Lord, who welcomed her with these sweet words: “Arise, my love; thou art all fair, O my love”, My mother, “come, thou shalt be crowned” (Cant. II, 10, and IV, 7). Then she entered into the glory which was prepared for her before all ages, and which corresponded to the graces and merits of her life, especially her profound humility; for in proportion as she had hidden herself from the eyes of men, so she appeared brilliant and clothed with splendor. Her splendor was so great that it eclipsed that of all the saints. Mary, humble, submissive, so often sorrowful, either at the foot of the Cross, or in suffering from the long absence of her Son, becomes to-day “the woman clothed with the sun” (Apoc. XII, 1), surrounded and penetrated with the eternal light of the Sun of justice, who elevates her above all the choirs of the angels on a throne of glory; and that nothing may be wanting to her triumph, after the expiration of three days, Jesus re-unites to her glorious soul the body which she had left in the tomb. He drew from the tomb this sacred Ark, which, having shared her labors, was also to share her reward and her immortality. Finally, Mary having participated more than any creature in the sufferings and humiliations of Jesus, the just Remunerator made her share above all others His glory, His kingdom and His happiness. O blessed participation in the pains and transitory humiliations of Jesus and of His death,

which merits for us and secures to us a more blessed conformity with His resurrection, His felicity and His glorious life. O Queen of heaven, render those who now rejoice at thy elevation and applaud thy triumph, worthy to attain to it one day.

St. Joachim, Sunday in the Octave of the Assumption.

I. POINT.

St. Joachim's eminent sanctity.

What honor for St. Joachim to be the father of Mary, the most holy and the most glorious of creatures, and to be the grandfather of the immortal King, of Him who is the glory and hope of mankind, the Ruler of princes and nations, of the incarnate God, at whose name every knee should bend in heaven, on earth and in hell! This singular honor, however, would have availed him but little, if he had not joined holiness to his exaltation. Though a descendant of David, the father of Mary and so nearly related to Jesus, would he have attracted the eyes of God, if he had failed to practise virtue? No, for holiness is preferable to all dignities; or rather, before God all dignities are as nothing, if not clothed with the beauty and ornaments of divine grace. Joachim's perfection was such as to render him worthy of being the father of the Queen of saints. Although in easy circumstances, he was always detached from earthly goods. He divided his goods into three parts; one for the temple, another for the poor, and the third for the support of his household. His life was devoted to prayer and penance; and in consideration of his prayers and those of St. Ann, his wife, God advanced the happy moment when the beneficent Dawn, *i. e.* Mary, appeared, announcing to the world the rising of the Sun of justice. Thus did St. Joachim contribute to

our redemption. This great saint ardently desires to help those who invoke him. And what more useful favor can we ask of him, than to understand, as he did, the value of virtue. He esteemed it above all goods; he made it the constant object of his thoughts, desires and efforts. He could say, like Solomon: "I have found nothing comparable to that precious treasure." Whilst others aspired only to increase their earthly fortune, he strove to acquire the imperishable wealth of holiness. Do we imitate him in this? Whence comes it that our mind is so filled with trifles, so eager to hear news, so full of cares about our health, our comfort, our good name, our success? Do we not sometimes prefer earth to heaven, the human to the divine, our whims to God's holy will?—O Lord, how many precious moments I lose in trifles, instead of spending them, as St. Joachim did, in meditating on the truths of salvation! Detach me from every thing earthly, and enable me fully to understand the one thing necessary, that is, a holy life, which alone will procure me a happy eternity.

II. POINT.

St. Joachim's glory and power.

The glory and power enjoyed in heaven by the blessed father of the Queen of virgins, are proportionate to his holiness. But as his holiness is proportionate to the exalted dignity, to which God raised him, by making him the father of Mary and the grandfather of Jesus, we may say that his throne in the heavenly Jerusalem is among the most glorious, and his power among the greatest. Moreover, his influence with Mary is unlimited, for she can refuse nothing to her father; and we know that she is all-powerful with her Son. She appeared one day to St. Gertrude accompanied by St.

Joachim, who was resplendent with light and seated on a royal throne; Mary presented to him one by one the petitions of the nuns who implored her assistance. This vision shows Mary's great deference for her father, and his great power over the heart of his beloved daughter. His power in heaven proceeds both from his merit and from the affection felt for him by Jesus and Mary. Hence we have reason to place unbounded confidence in his protection. But to sanctify ourselves, it does not suffice to esteem the Christian virtues; we must also practise them; and for this we need supernatural help. We need, says St. Alphonsus, "to know ourselves, to despise ourselves, to be in all things conformed to the holy will of God." But how can we do this without abundant graces? If we invoke St. Joachim, he will aid us in securing them; he will obtain for us that profound humility, which deserved for him the privilege of becoming the father of the humblest of creatures; he will help us to practise self-denial, which will regulate our interior according to the maxims of faith, by repressing our evil inclinations, which are opposed to the all perfect and all amiable will of God.—O Lord Jesus, I am far from possessing the virtue of Thy faithful servants, who measured their progress by their love of sacrifice and their victories over their evil propensities. Through the intercession of St. Joachim, grant that I may have the most humble sentiments of myself, the strength to renounce my too human and natural tendencies, that I may ever obey the attractions and inspirations of grace, so that I may raise in me over the ruins of my self-love the edifice of Thy holy and sanctifying love.

St. Bernard, August 20th.**I. POINT.**

*The just man gives his heart from the dawn of day
to seek the Lord. (Eccli. XXXIX, 6.)*

St. Bernard, still adorned with baptismal innocence and ardently desiring to preserve it in all its purity, fled, when very young, to a monastery. From his earliest years, as soon as he perceived the first rays of grace, with which the "Sun of justice" (Mal. IV, 2) enlightened and warmed his heart, faithful to its inspirations, he hastened to seek the Lord; and to give Him his heart more perfectly, he separated himself from all that could stain or divide it. He forgot his body, and so mortified all his senses, that he seemed to have lost the use of them, seeing without seeing, and hearing without hearing, not permitting himself the most innocent curiosity, or the slightest gratification. To take food had become a torture to him; his taste no longer discerned anything, and he was so recollected and transported in God, that he no longer perceived external things. He gave up even the remembrance of the world, and abandoned the property which he possessed, saying religiously to his youngest brother: I choose heaven, and I leave earth to you. He desired to be forgotten, despised and abandoned, as a vessel broken and destroyed (Ps. XXX, 13); as he expressed it in the words of the prophet. Thus dead to all that is not God, he gave himself without reserve to his Sovereign Master, penetrated with this great sentiment that it is unworthy of the majesty of God, to make Himself known to one who does not seek Him with all the powers of his soul and all the strength of his heart.

II. POINT.

“He will open his mouth in prayer and make supplication for his sins; and, if it shall please the Lord, He will fill him with the spirit of understanding” (Eccli. XXXIX, 7). Prayer was the constant occupation of St. Bernard; he added to it the hardships and austerities of penance. He wept bitterly over his least faults, and even over the slightest appearance of faults. When he was constrained to interrupt his tears and his silence, he would complain, saying: It is not the duty of a religious, such as I appear to be, nor of a sinner, such as I really am, to speak, to rejoice, still less to instruct others; but it is his duty to weep over his sins. This great man, taking the lowest place, was often forced to go up higher. He became the arbiter of sovereigns, the destroyer of heresies and schisms, the light of the Church, who chose him to point out her lawful Pontiff; the reformer and support of monastic regularity and fervor; finally, the counsellor and support of kings, of prelates, even of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in the person of the Pope Eugenius IV., who had been his disciple, and who still regarded and consulted him as his master, even after he had become the head of the universal Church. But St. Bernard, always little in his own eyes, united humility and Christian meekness with apostolic fortitude and with the magnanimity and courage inspired by pure love of God and ardent zeal for His glory. In the midst of the most flattering applause he regretted his beloved solitude, he longed to return to it, and called himself the chimera of his age, saying that he had only the habit and the name of a religious. Yet every one constantly admired his spirit and sublime and heroic virtues. Giving to all counsels, instructions, decisions full of wisdom and heavenly prudence, he

thought himself beneath all, he valued only the science of the saints, which, he said, consists in bearing pains, labors and humiliations in the present time, in order to procure delights, glory and joy for eternity.

III. POINT.

Filled "with the spirit of understanding, he will pour forth the words of his wisdom" (Eccli. XXXIX, 9). St. Bernard often declared that his doctrine was not the work of his own labor, of his studies, and that he never had any other master, or any other book, than Jesus Christ crucified. Therefore, as the rain descends from heaven, so the words and instructions of this holy Doctor were all heavenly and divine: "Grace was poured out on his lips" (Ps. XLIV, 3), and what is said of the Son of God, may be applied to him, in due proportion: "Never man spoke like this man" (John VII, 46). His language was entirely transformed into that of the Holy Scriptures. What is there sweeter and stronger, more humble and more exalted, more simple and more penetrating than the works of this great saint, in whom Jesus lived, spoke and acted? His incomparable facility in preaching, in writing and speaking of God, with sweet and moving power, arose from this fulness of Jesus, which united in him so many rare qualities, apparently incompatible with each other; but he received all these graces especially through his tender and heart-felt devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who is, as he calls her, our powerful Mediatrix with the Sovereign Mediator. His confidence in her was a fruitful source of all the virtues, of his spirit of prayer, of his burning love of God, the measure of which, he said, is to love Him without measure; of his fervor, which never cooled, and which, on the contrary, increased incessantly, by these words, which he often repeated to him-

self: Why, and with what intention did I come into Religion? Finally, the Blessed Mother of God, after having protected him on earth, wished to make him share her triumph in heaven. In regard to this glorious mystery, he thus expresses himself: The glorious Mary ascending to heaven, filled its blessed citizens with joy. If the voice of the salutation of the humble Virgin made a child still confined in his mother's womb leap for joy, what was the delight of the saints, when they not only heard her, but had the happiness of seeing her and enjoying her presence? They had all entered into the joy of their Lord; but the Virgin increased and perfected this joy, and what Jesus desired for His apostles, was accomplished on this day, that "your joy may be full and perfect" (John XV, 11). O great and faithful servant of Mary, share her triumph; go, partake of that common joy of the heavenly Jerusalem; but do not forget us who still groan in this land of exile: be thyself our mediator and advocate with the Queen of heaven; implant in our hearts an humble confidence in her power, and a tender and constant love for Jesus.

St. Jane Frances de Chantal, August 21st.

I. POINT.

The lively and firm faith of St. Frances de Chantal.

When she was only five years old, St. Frances already showed so great a horror for heretics, that she reproved, with a sagacity and an energy above her age, a Protestant gentleman for denying the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist. Her father, charmed with such dispositions, neglected nothing to develop them. He taught her to attach herself with her inmost heart to the Catholic Church and to the common Father of the faithful. She profited by his instructions

and practised her faith later on even unto heroism. As a wife and mother of a family, she ruled her house with a truly Christian wisdom. Her household became a model of order, modesty and activity. The poor, the sick and the afflicted were all objects of her solicitude. In them she would behold the person of Christ Himself, and took pleasure in rendering them the most menial services. During a famine God recompensed her faith and her charity by multiplying the food she distributed to the needy. It was the same spirit of faith, which urged her to conquer herself, to humble herself, to renounce her own will, and to die utterly to herself, as St. Francis de Sales expressed it. She succeeded in it perfectly, for she could truly say: "I wish for God alone, both in this world and in the next." Is such a faith always the motive of our actions and the rule of our life? Let us not obey our impressions, our views, or human respect, rather than the principles of perfection and of an enlightened conscience. Let us consider our neighbor as the image of God, the child of the heavenly Father, the brother of Jesus Christ, the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, a member of the mystical body of the Church, of which the Redeemer is the Head. If some exalted personage would send us his own son, would we speak to him harshly and without respect? Why, then, do we do this towards the poor, the ignorant, the rustic, whom our Lord considers as His children and sends to us that we may help them?—O my God, if I had the faith of the saints, with what respect and deference I would treat all men, however mean and lowly they may be! Vouchsafe to inspire me with that lively and firm faith, which will show me the beauty of our holy mysteries, the value of good works, the nobility of souls, and, at the same time, enable me to conquer

myself, to seek Thee only, and to profess my faith both by word and conduct.

II. POINT.

Constancy of St. Francis de Chantal in the practice of virtue.

The resolute constancy of our saint was often manifested during her life. Having lost her husband by an accident as deplorable as unforeseen, she was overwhelmed with grief, but she overcame it by the vigor of her faith and the energy of her piety. She acted in like manner whenever death deprived her of any of her children. Though she deeply felt the loss, her greatness of soul enabled her to produce the most generous acts. Being called by God to leave the world, she had the heroic courage to walk over her son, who had prostrated himself at the threshold of the door to prevent her going away. But what manifested still more her strength of soul, were her great interior trials. For forty-one years she felt only disgust in her pious exercises. It seemed to her she had lost faith, hope and charity, so little did she experience their effects. Seized with an extreme fear of being in the state of sin, she thought herself forsaken by God; and during the last nine years of her life, her interior sufferings were still more grievous. She seemed to see our Lord driving her out of His presence, and felt such painful impressions, very much like those of the reprobate. Amid so great desolation, she ceased not to produce, without knowing it, says St. Francis de Sales, the most beautiful acts of confidence in God and abandonment to His providence. Her example should cover us with confusion, for we neglect prayer, whenever we do not experience in it sensible devotion. Is not this a sign that we seek therein our own gratification rather than the pleasure of God? Prayer is specially necessary for

us in time of trial, dryness and temptation; for then we are in great need of divine aid. This very motive should, at such times, induce us to prolong our prayer, as Jesus did in His agony in the Garden of olives.— O my loving Redeemer, by the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother and of St. Frances, inspire me with the firm determination to bear uncomplainingly not only exterior evils, but also the most overwhelming spiritual pains, and never to cease praying amid disgust, sadness and combats. Make me constant and faithful in my exercises of piety, so that I may always fervently strive after perfection.

St. Bartholomew, Apostle, August 24th.

I. POINT.

“Jesus spent the whole night in prayer.”

(Luke VI, 12.)

All the actions of Jesus Christ our Lord serve for our instruction; He spent the day in preaching and the night in prayer. He prays as our Master; He prays as our Highpriest, to obtain mercy for us. Jesus prayed especially before beginning His most important actions. Before undertaking the labors and the preaching of His ministry, He retired for forty days into the desert to fast and pray. Wishing to choose His twelve apostles, an election which was one of the greatest works that He had to accomplish on earth, He watched the whole night, and spent it in prayer (Luke VI, 12). Finally, to prepare for the combat of His Passion, He retired three times to pray to His Father. Let us learn from Him to begin all our works by the invocation of His holy name: and the more important our undertaking is, the more earnestly we should pray, saying: “Lord, teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God” (Ps.

CXLII, 10). Give me to will and to do (Phil. II, 13); give me light to know, grace to will, and strength to accomplish Thy most holy and adorable will.

II. POINT.

“Jesus spent the whole night in prayer.” St. Bartholomew imitated Jesus very perfectly in His assiduity in prayer; it was his constant occupation: afterwards he corresponded very faithfully to his vocation, following Jesus in his labors, remaining with Him in his temptations, and persevering to the end, as a faithful witness of His miracles, and a zealous co-operator in the work of the salvation of the world. O Lord, blessed is this saint, whom Thou didst honor with Thy friendship, who was a member of Thy holy family here below, and who enjoyed Thy divine familiar intercourse! What treasures of grace are received, following Thee and in Thy company! Lord, vouchsafe to admit me to it, and grant that it may be my only joy, my only delight on earth to follow Thee, to imitate Thee, and to cling to Thee alone.

III. POINT.

“He chose twelve among His disciples, whom He named apostles” (Luke VI, 13). St. Bartholomew was among the number of those, whom Jesus chose and called to bear His name throughout the world. He traversed many provinces and kingdoms; he carried wherever he went the faith and knowledge of Jesus: he poured grace, the spirit and love of the Saviour into souls, he rooted out, destroyed and ruined the empire of Satan and self-love in hearts, and converting many nations, he established and extended the kingdom of the Son of God. He not only did great things, laboring much for the glory of his Master, but he also suffered great trials; and as Jesus placed the price of our

redemption more in His sufferings than in His actions, so this holy apostle, after having labored, toiled, suffered, and passed through many tribulations, crowned his labors and sufferings by a cruel martyrdom, having been flayed alive. It is written in the Book of Job, that a man will give skin for skin, and all that he has for his life (Job II, 4); thus St. Bartholomew gave all, his skin and even his life for the faith and for the love of Jesus, his true life. O great saint, obtain for us grace to give all, to do all and to suffer all in imitation of thee, to increase, to strengthen and perfect the kingdom of Jesus in our hearts.

St. Louis, King of France, August 25th.

I. POINT.

“Thou hast made us kings and priests to our God.”

(Apoc. V, 10.)

Jesus is the King of kings: all the princes of the earth reign only by Him (Prov. VIII, 15); their authority is derived from His, and is dependent on Him; they reign more perfectly, in proportion to their submission and obedience. This appears wonderfully in St. Louis, who united all the evangelical virtues with royal greatness, and who made Christian humility and penance sit beside him on the throne; for he was very austere to himself, subjecting and lacerating his innocent body by disciplines and frequent fasts, above all on Fridays, in honor of the Passion of our Lord: thus he preserved admirable purity in the midst of the distractions of the court. He obeyed exactly not only the commandments of God and all the inspirations of His Spirit, but also the queen his mother, and him whom he had chosen for the guide of his conscience. He followed the divine inspirations, notwithstanding all the

opposition of flesh and blood, when God called him twice to the conquest of the Holy Land; finally, attentive to extirpate vice in his states, and to destroy sin in himself, he ruled his passions; and, making these passions the matter of his sacrifices, he merited to participate in the royal priesthood, which makes us kings and priests to our God. O sacred royalty to which we are all called! May we all endeavor to acquire it by subduing our passions, by becoming victims, by immolating to God our inclinations and desires.

II. POINT.

“He could do evil things and hath not done them” (Eccli. XXXI, 10). The virtues of this holy king were so much the more admirable, as they were practised in spite of opposition, and of most powerful obstacles. In the midst of riches he possessed the spirit of poverty in a sublime degree, and he showed this by his surprising moderation in all that regarded his person: he was lavish to the poor, in proportion as he was sparing towards himself; he loved them, washed and kissed the feet of a number of them every Saturday; on vigils and feasts he served them at dinner before going to his own table; every day he fed one hundred and twenty in his palace, and often ate what was left from their meals. He practised incredible liberality in alms-giving, in the foundation and endowment of hospitals, of monasteries, of churches; scarcely is there a province in France, which does not still preserve monuments of his royal piety. Thus he honored and imitated the Son of God, who, rich as He was, became poor to enrich us (2 Cor. VIII, 9). This great king also showed profound humility in the greatness and the majesty of his state, and in the practice of the most heroic virtues. It is easy to be humble in a low condition; but to be humble when

surrounded with glory and honor, seems difficult: in this he imitated Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother Mary, who, seeing herself exalted to the supreme happiness of the divine maternity, regarded only her nothingness, and recognized her lowliness: he imitated Jesus Christ, who, being equal to God, annihilated and humbled Himself (Phil. II, 6). Thus St. Louis imitated the King of kings and the Queen of heaven; being great and a sovereign, he deeply humbled himself, and, being king, he became the servant of the poor, seeing Jesus Christ in them; thus he perfectly accomplished the precept of the Holy Ghost: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things" (Eccli. III, 20), for it is only God whose power is absolutely great, and it is only by the humble that He is truly honored.

III. POINT.

St. Louis preserved the spirit of prayer, elevation and constant union of his soul with God in the multiplicity of affairs and exterior occupations. His reign was supported on these two pillars—piety and justice. By his piety he honored God, served and loved Him; throughout the world he increased His glory, His love and His service: his piety was the foundation of his justice, which made him devote himself entirely to his neighbor for God's sake; by his piety he governed his subjects, established holy laws, relieved the poor and the afflicted, repressed the rebellious, and did justice to all. The intrepidity of his courage appeared not only in the success of his arms against the infidels, but also in his captivity, in his sufferings and his patience in the midst of the greatest trials. For, having been vanquished, he showed himself invincible and remained victorious over himself, the world and the devil; being captive, he delivered the captive infidels from the

tyranny of Satan, having converted many to the faith, and he delivered Christians from the hands of the barbarians; finally, he suffered and was afflicted during his whole life until his death, that he might in all things be like the King of kings, and crown his holiness. O God, who didst crown the labors of the holy king, whose feast we celebrate, and who didst make him pass from the earthly kingdom to the heavenly kingdom, render us worthy, through his merits and intercession, to imitate his virtues, in order that we may participate one day in his glory and reward.

St. Augustine, August 28th.

I. POINT.

“You are the salt of the earth” (Mat. V, 13).

St. Augustine was truly the salt of the earth by his conversion and his penitent life. As salt is drawn from salt waters, so this saint was drawn from heresy to faith, from sin to grace, from the vanity of the world to the supreme truth of Jesus Christ our Lord, from the pride and inflation of worldly knowledge to the purity and simplicity of the evangelical doctrine; finally, St. Augustine, from a partisan of error, of falsehood and license, became the defender of the faith, the support of the truth, and a model of chastity and holiness. As salt is formed by the heat of the sun's rays evaporating the salt water, so grace powerfully accomplished all these wonders in our saint, having drawn him so strongly, that he could not escape from its divine heat, or resist its gentle influence. He had previously long combated grace. He says: I was attached to sin; I was bound by my evil habits, not with chains of iron, but by a will harder than iron itself. I besought Thee, Lord, to conquer my resistance, and I feared to be heard; I

always put off till the next day. He continues: No one loses God, if he is not deceived; no one seeks Him, if he is not warned; no one recovers Him, if he is not purified. We discover this truth in his conversion. He had lost God by the illusion of error and the seduction of vice; he sought Him, being warned in the depths of his soul by the lights and inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and exteriorly by the tears, the counsels and the reproaches of his pious mother; finally, he found God by sincere and constant penance, which purified him every day more and more, as gold in the crucible. As salt is useful only when melted and losing its own existence, so St. Augustine not only gave up sin, but he gave up himself, he renounced himself and happily lost himself, to find himself in God. Purified in the waters of baptism, loaded with mercy and the blessings of the Lord, he never forgot his past sins, remembering the counsel of the Wise Man: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven" (Eccli. V, 5). He worked out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. II, 12); regarding himself always as a sinner, he gave no truce to his tears, and lived and died in the laborious exercises of penance. In his last illness he had the seven penitential psalms, which contain the sentiments of a true penitent, transcribed and placed round his bed; and to occupy himself with them more at leisure, in humble silence, he would not see any one nor speak to any one. O great saint, model of a perfect conversion, if we have had the misfortune to resemble thee in thy errors, obtain for us grace to imitate thee in thy return to God; excite in our hearts that loving contrition, that deep confusion, that salutary compunction which constitute penance and produce reconciliation with God.

II. POINT.

God, making man to His image, imprinted in him two features of His divinity, by making him capable of knowing and loving Him. St. Augustine possessed these two advantages in a high degree: he was a seraph in love, and a cherub in knowledge, in the knowledge of God: "he was a burning and shining lamp" (John V, 35), as our Lord called St. John; burning by the fervor of his love and charity, by the holiness of his life and example; shining by his knowledge and his lights, by the force and elegance of his expressions, by the height and the depth of his doctrine. Only to shine is but vanity; only to burn is likewise only a little thing; but St. Bernard says, to burn and to give light at the same time is perfection; and it was the peculiar merit of St. Augustine to unite these two qualities. He said to God: Thou hast wounded my heart with the darts of Thy love; Thy words are so many arrows which penetrate the depth of my soul. The words of St. Augustine were all fire: we cannot read his writings without feeling their heavenly warmth; in them solidity of maxim and sublimity of thought are united with the unction of piety: therefore, in the most important dogmas of religion, Popes and General Councils have followed his opinions and his doctrine in their decrees and their definitions. Like the Israelites, he labored with one hand to build up the temple of God, which is the Church, and with the other he took the sword of the Word to combat his enemies (2 Esdras IV, 17). His combats against heresy were so successful, that he delivered almost all Africa from the Manicheans, the Arians, the Donatists and the Pelagians. O Jesus, sovereign Pastor of our souls, we give Thee thanks for having given to Thy flock, redeemed by Thy Blood, so

invincible a defender; vouchsafe to remember Thy Church, "which Thou hast possessed from the beginning" (Ps. LXXIII, 2), and by the instructions, the examples and the merits of this great saint, extirpate heresies, destroy sin, convert sinners and inflame all hearts with the same fire which consumed his, that with him we may love Thee, bless Thee and glorify Thee in the eternal and heavenly country.

III. POINT.

Humble thyself in all things, in proportion as thou art great (Eccli. III, 20). St. Augustine followed, to the letter, this counsel of the Holy Spirit: he did not become vain-glorious on account of the gifts of God; the more he possessed them, the more he humbled himself, saying: Lord, to Thy grace I am indebted, because Thou dost not abandon me to myself. And to make God's grace more manifest, and to exalt the divine mercies towards him, he does not fear to acknowledge all his unworthiness in his Confessions. There he reveals all the weaknesses and the sins of his life, not only to his contemporaries, but also to future ages; and what many blush to say in the ear of the priest to receive absolution, St. Augustine confesses publicly to all men, present and to come, with a humility which has no parallel. This humility is no less surprising in his Retractions, in which this great man, without allowing himself to be dazzled by his rare and rich talents, subjects his writings to the most severe censure, which he himself pronounces, correcting his mistakes, proposing his doubts, and leaving to the most remote posterity an humble confession of his ignorance in many things, but which, notwithstanding his ingenious humility, is a new proof of the sublimity of his intellect, of the depth of his discernment, and still more of his

heroic and solid virtue. It is this virtue which to the brilliant titles of destroyer of heresy, pillar of the Church, support of truth, master of theology, glory of the learned, restorer of piety in the clergy, father of religious and of virgins, finally, doctor of grace, which he justly merited, gives a right to add that he is also the perfect model of Christian humility, the most learned among the saints and the humble, and the most humble among the prelates and Doctors of the Church. Let us sinners, who are so little and so poor in virtue and merit, learn from this great saint to know and humble ourselves.

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, September 8th.

I. POINT.

“Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?”

(Cant. VI, 9.)

The Blessed Virgin rises in her birth as the dawn of our salvation; she preceded and announced to us the “Sun of Justice” (Mal. IV, 2), Jesus, the bright luminary, who was to dissipate the obscure night of the Old Law. The Church exhorts us to rejoice at Mary’s birth: in fact, her birth is a great subject of joy for us, since by it the promises of God and His eternal designs in regard to the Incarnation of His Son, our Saviour, began to be accomplished. The birth of the children of Adam is deserving of tears, because, being conceived in sin (Ps. L, 7), they are born children of wrath, sinners (Eph. II, 3); therefore one of them said, in the person of all: “Let the day perish in which I was born” (Job III, 3). But the Blessed Virgin was born the daughter of God, as soon as she was the daughter of Adam; she was sanctified the first instant of her conception; she lived to God before living to herself; in

her grace anticipated nature. As sin only merits our tears, and as the grace of God, which is opposed to it, is a source of joy, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, adorned with grace and freed from all stain, should be celebrated with general delight. O Mary, newly born, "thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee" (Cant. IV, 7). Thy birth spreads universal joy throughout the earth, because from thee was to go forth the Splendor of the Father, Jesus Christ our Lord, "the Expectation of the nations" (Gen. XLIX, 10), our only hope, the only source of our happiness. O Mary, our august Mother, may He come to-day, in honor of thy birth, to take new birth in my heart; may He dissipate in me the darkness of sin, and establish the reign of His grace.

II. POINT.

"Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?" Mary was born with a far higher degree of grace than that in which the angels were created; and even, according to the opinion of many, with a higher degree than that in which they were confirmed for eternity. She was established in a more eminent holiness and a more abundant fulness of the Holy Ghost and of all the virtues, than the highest of the seraphim; and what the apostle said of Jesus, may be said of Mary, in a suitable proportion, that she was created more excellent and more perfect than the angels, because she received a name and a dignity far above them all (Heb. I, 4); for the angels are ministers of the will of God, and their grace corresponded to their office; but the Virgin, having been destined to be the Mother of God, to command Him whom the angels serve, and under whose power they tremble, received a grace proportioned to her exalted state; she was confirmed in it from the first

moment of her existence; and this grace increased in her continually. Therefore the heavenly choirs asked: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun" (Cant. VI, 9), "whose foundations (or beginnings) are in the holy mountains" (Ps. LXXXVI, 1), and whose dwelling is "in the full assembly of the saints"? (Eccli. XXIV, 16). All these magnificent expressions signify that in Mary are found the faith of the patriarchs, the zeal of the prophets, the charity of the apostles, the constancy of the martyrs, the mortification of confessors, the purity of virgins and of the angels themselves, and all this in a most eminent degree (St. Bernard). O Blessed Virgin, truly full of grace from the first moment of thy life, pour upon me of thy fulness, and obtain for me that I may grow and advance in grace and in the love of God until death.

III. POINT.

"He that shall find me, shall find life" (Prov. VIII, 35). The Blessed Virgin was born, not only without sin and full of grace, but she was born to merit grace for sinners, and to give them the very Author of grace, the Peacemaker between heaven and earth, whom the angels announced to the shepherds in these words: "To-day a Saviour is born to you" (Luke II, 11). In like manner, we may say that the Mother of mercy, the Refuge of sinners, the Mediatrix of our salvation, is born to-day, not for the angels, but for men. In her conception she received from God, and in her nativity she begins to give to the world something of what she had received; she was then sanctified as a worthy instrument to serve for the glory of the Most High; she was filled with Him, and became by her birth a channel to pour Him forth and to communicate Him. We

should then go to her, and have recourse to her with confidence. The three graces that we ought to ask of her on this blessed day, are, first, the spirit of our vocation, and the perfect accomplishment of the duties of our state; second, an entire conversion and consecration of our souls to God, henceforth to serve and to love Him alone; third, a faithful use of grace, and constant progress in His ways. O most pure Virgin, obtain for us these indispensable and precious favors. This we ask through the first elevation of thy heart to God, through the first sacrifice which thou didst offer to Him of thyself, at the moment of thy coming on earth, through thy perseverance and continual progress in His holy love, which placed thee above all that is not God.

**Holy Name of Mary,
Sunday in the Octave of Mary's Nativity.**

I. POINT.

Beneficent power of the Name of Mary.

“Thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul” (Is. XXVI, 8). The prophet here joins the name to the remembrance; names, in fact, recall to us the persons who bear them, their grandeur, their qualities, their virtues; they, in some manner, participate in their excellence, in their power and goodness. As we obtain all heavenly goods by praying for them in the name of Jesus, so do we also, by invoking the name of Mary, the dispensatrix of grace, receive all helps in proportion to our desires, our confidence and wants. The name of Mary, according to St. Bonaventure, signifies three things: Star of the sea, dominatrix or sovereign, and ocean of bitterness. As Star of the sea, the Blessed Virgin, when invoked, obtains for us light to

dispel our darkness, to banish from our mind the false principles of the world, and to point out to us the secure way of perfection and salvation. As dominatrix or sovereign, Mary, when besought by us, procures for us victory in all temptations, especially in those endangering chastity. He who is careful to repeat her virginal name in this kind of combat, possesses a sure sign, says St. Alphonsus, of having remained pure amid the assaults of concupiscence. As meaning "ocean of bitterness", Mary's name recalls to us the great sufferings of our spiritual Mother. In pronouncing it with that of Jesus, we easily represent to ourselves Calvary, where we behold the two victims of our salvation immolating themselves for us with one heart full of love for us, and animating us by their example to accept lovingly all our trials. This is always of great help to encourage us, to make us resigned and to console us in all our crosses. "In all dangers, in anguish and doubt," says St. Bernard, "think of Mary, invoke Mary." May her blessed name, united to that of Jesus, never depart from our lips, and still less from our hearts!—Besides the indulgence of fifty days granted by the Church to those who devoutly pronounce these holy names, our Saviour, speaking to St. Bridget, promised three precious graces to the souls that invoke with confidence the august name of His beloved Mother;—first, perfect contrition and the forgiveness of all their sins, second, the means of fully satisfying divine justice and escaping the pains of purgatory, and third, the strength to persevere until death and thus reach a blessed eternity.—O holy Virgin, my sweet and loving Mother, I am determined to invoke thy holy name in all my trials and temptations, during life and at death, with fervor and confidence, and, at the same time, to try to merit thy protection by imitating thy virtues.

II. POINT.

Homages due to the Name of Mary.

The name of Mary, being, as it were, the image of that loving Mother, bears in itself our august Sovereign's grandeurs, goodness and perfections. Hence respect, confidence and love are due to it as to Mary herself. In fact, who would refuse to respect that sublime name? Very different from other names imposed or invented by the human mind or caprice, it came from heaven, from the very heart of God. The Father clothed it with power, the Son, with wisdom, and the Holy Ghost, with charity. According to St. Peter Damian, the whole Blessed Trinity drew it from its treasures, rendering it, next to that of Jesus, superior to every other name, so as to procure for it the veneration of heaven, earth and hell. This holy name is deserving also of our confidence, for Mary is also our Mother, and we are her children. Her sweet name is rich in all kinds of goods, and, after that of Jesus, there is no other from which pious souls draw so many graces and so much consolation. "It is never pronounced", says St. Bonaventure, "without some spiritual profit."—St. Antony of Padua says of it: "It is joy to the heart, honey to the mouth, and a sweet melody to the ear." When Blessed Henry Suso pronounced it, he was transported, as it were, out of himself, and, as he said, he would have wished to feel his heart leap from his breast to his lips. Let us also be animated with the most tender affection for the name of our Queen, of our Mother. Let us often pronounce it solely out of love, "so that", says St. Ambrose, "the perfume of grace with which it is penetrated, may descend into our inmost soul and embalm it with a heavenly sweetness."—If, O Mary, thy name is so amiable and so graceful, how much more

art not thou thyself lovely! And I, thy child, how far am I from resembling thee! Thou art so humble, and I am so full of self-love and self-esteem; thou art so pure, so united to God, and I am so defiled by sin, so devoid of the spirit of prayer and of the perfection of the saints. Deign to obtain for me a filial confidence in thy maternal goodness, a tender love for thee, and a constant desire to ask thee for the graces requisite for a true disciple of Jesus, thy Son.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14th.

I. POINT.

“Jesus Christ became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross; therefore God hath exalted Him.”
(Phil. II, 8.)

The honor, the elevation, the glory with which God crowned His Son, Jesus Christ, corresponded to the excessive humiliations and abasements by which the Saviour annihilated himself even to the torture of slaves. The Cross, which was the instrument of His suffering and ignominy, thus became worthy of respect, and the object of the veneration of angels and men; and its wood, made precious by its contact with the [sacred Body of our Divine Master, and by the adorable Blood with which it was dyed and washed, is honored with a worship of respect and adoration, because it represents to us Jesus Christ and the mysteries of our redemption, which He accomplished on it. Grant, Lord, that I may love, adore and embrace Thy Cross, in order to have a share in the salvation which Thou hast acquired by it for me. May the remembrance of Thy Cross, of Thy nails, Thy thorns, be as a bouquet of myrrh, reposing on Thy bosom (Cant. I, 12), to preserve my heart from the corruption of sin, enabling it to love and imitate

Thy patience, Thy mortification, Thy humility and Thy penance.

II. POINT.

Before the death of Jesus the cross was considered infamous, and sufferings were hard and bitter; death was most terrible, and the evil most dreaded; but the Son of the Almighty, carrying His obedience so far as to die on the cross, rendered sufferings and humiliations sweet and lovable, death precious and a source of life; and thus the cross, which was a reproach and a folly in the eyes of the world, became the wisdom and the power of God Himself (1 Cor. I, 18). O hidden treasures contained in the Heart of Jesus! Treasures of grace and merit, treasures of knowledge and virtue, treasures of all that is good and desirable! Let us regard all that is learned, out of this sacred school, as profound ignorance; for there only does the Holy Ghost Himself instruct; let us say with St. Paul: "I judged not myself to know anything but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. II, 2). "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. VI, 14).

III. POINT.

"There are many who are enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ" (Phil. III, 18). As it is not enough to believe in baptism and the Eucharist, for we must receive the one, and live by the virtue of the other, so it is not sufficient to honor the Cross by some mark of respect, to know what Jesus Christ teaches us by it, and to believe that He has made it the instrument of our salvation; we must add actions to faith; and as Jesus Christ was not satisfied to tell us that we must suffer, but suffered Himself for us and to give us an example, so we should imitate Him, by suffering after Him and

like Him, for it is for all, without exception, that He pronounced these words: "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross every day, and follow Me" (Luke IX, 23). We find in the figure of the cross, and in its four parts, which St. Paul wishes us to understand, a striking lesson of the manner in which we ought to bear it, in order to honor it, and to draw from it real profit. The length of the cross represents to us the great length of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and His perseverance in enduring them from the first moment of His life to that of His death; hence we learn with what patience we ought to bear the cross, not for one day only, but, according to the word of Jesus, every day of our life (Luke IX, 23). We ought to be able to say with the apostle: "I die daily" (1 Cor. XV, 31); "always bearing about in our bodies the mortification of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. IV, 10); and with David: "For Thy sake (O Lord) we are killed all the day long" (Ps. XLIII, 22).—The width of the cross signifies the immense charity of Jesus Christ, by which He suffered from all and for all. Let us not complain, if we receive from all, friends and enemies, trials and contradictions; let us bear them from whatever side they may come, let us return good for evil, and, while suffering, let us pray, as Jesus Christ did, for those who make us suffer; may charity enable us to endure all without murmur, without complaint, and even with joy.—The height represents the divine intention with which Jesus Christ suffered, without any other interest than the glory of His Father and our salvation. May these same principles animate us. Let us look at God, and not at the instruments which He uses to afflict us; let us look at His Providence which orders all things, and without whose permission not a hair falls from our head; let us

look at the recompense which the cross prepares for our fidelity; for the height of the cross represents the sight and the firm hope of heavenly goods (St. Augustine). Finally, by the depth of the cross is represented the immense and impenetrable abyss of the humility of Jesus Christ, which is as great as His majesty is infinite, and was consummated in the opprobrium of the cross. Let us suffer with a patience that is constant, unchanging, loving, magnanimous, submissive and humble; let us remember that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily through pure love, and that for us sinners suffering is necessary. Let us look at our Head, and, moved by His example, let us say: If God, who is just and holy, suffered in this manner, what should not guilty men endure? "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke XXIII, 31). By suffering thus with Jesus Christ, we shall glorify His Cross, and shall merit to reign with Him in eternity.

St. Matthew, Apostle, September 21st.

I. POINT.

"Jesus passing on, saw a man named Matthew sitting in the custom-house, and He saith to him: Follow Me" (Mat. IX, 9).

The transient glance which Jesus cast on Matthew, is a continuation of the eternal foresight, by which He had chosen him and predestined him to the dignity of the apostleship: all the circumstances of his vocation and conversion had been foreseen in the divine Council. Thus what often appears to the human mind as the effect of chance, or as something very indifferent, is a means prepared by God and an instrument which He wishes to use for our sanctification. It is of great importance, therefore, to be very attentive and faithful to

the moment of grace, whether it touches the heart by good motions and enlightens the mind by powerful truths, or engages or attracts the will by some word or look. Christ said to St. Matthew: "Follow Me". Jesus sought him, not for his merits, for he was unworthy of His grace, being a publican and a sinner, but through pure goodness and excessive love. St. Paul says: "He hath saved us, not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy" (Tit. III, 5). Let us look at Jesus, for He first looked on us, before we had thought of Him; let us love Him, since He first loved us (1 John IV, 10), and when we merited only His hatred; let us follow Him, for He first called us through a pure effect of His clemency and goodness. It is a great glory to follow the Lord (Eccli. XXIII, 38); it is, in fact, the whole summary of the Christian life.

II. POINT.

"Follow Me". How greatly we should admire in this vocation the goodness of the Master who calls, and the docility of the disciple who obeys, since both are the effect of Christ's grace and mercy. The obedience of St. Matthew has many characteristics. It is blind and simple, for this receiver of taxes does not reason; it is humble, courageous and faithful, for he submits and sacrifices alike the lights of his mind and the attachment of his heart, promptly giving up all that hitherto interested him here below; it is unhesitating, without delay, for at the same hour that the eyes of the Saviour are fixed upon him, and he hears His voice, he does not deliberate, he does not put off for a moment, he rises, he leaves all to follow Him. His obedience was persevering, for St. Matthew attached himself to Jesus, loved and esteemed Him alone, as being the only one

lovable, the only one worthy of esteem; he followed Him constantly, without looking back. After having left his occupations and his riches, he never returned to them. O example of perfect obedience, which we ought to imitate by corresponding to our vocation simply, humbly, faithfully, courageously, promptly; and to persevere in it till death! For to such an obedience is the recompense reserved.

III. POINT.

St. Matthew not only corresponded faithfully to his vocation, but he preserved it carefully, and co-operated with it efficaciously, preaching the name of Jesus Christ, and establishing His faith, His knowledge and His love throughout the universe. As an evangelist, he still makes his voice heard by all the nations of the earth, and his mission will extend to all countries, to all ages, and even to the last judgment: a prerogative which is peculiar to him with St. John among the apostles, and which greatly extends the ministry of his apostleship. Among the animals of Ezechiel, which represent the evangelists, the face of the man is attributed to St. Matthew, because he regarded Jesus in His humanity, as St. John regarded Him in His divinity. O excellence of our blessed apostle, to have had Jesus the Man-God as the only object of his thoughts, words, occupation, preaching, and, finally, of his love and imitation! O Jesus, be Thou the only end of my desires and of my projects; be the divine Model, which I may study, follow and copy all the days of my life.

Our Lady of Mercy, September 24th.

I. POINT.

From what bonds Mary frees us.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Mahomedans, masters of a great part of Spain, held in

captivity and slavery an immense number of Christians, and cruelly tormented them to compel them to give up their faith. Not a few yielded and apostatized. Prayers and vows ascended from every quarter to the Queen of mercy, to obtain a prompt remedy to these fearful evils. Sympathizing with the distress of her children, the sweet Mother of mercy appeared one night to three illustrious persons, directing them to unite their efforts to found a religious order for the redemption of captives. They obeyed, and the Church approved the order, and on this day celebrates the memory of Mary's apparition. The Christians loaded with chains remind us of the bonds of sin, of the devil, of our sensual desires,—bonds which make us slaves during life, and expose us to a far worse slavery and misery in the next life. Mary by her mediation contributed to our redemption from this slavery, which was effected by her divine Son. Are we still enchained by tepidity, by habitual small faults, or by some unmortified passion or inclination? If so, let us have recourse to Our Lady of mercy, who will hasten to our aid. She who sacrificed her only Son for us, will not forget the sorrows she endured for our salvation. If she obtains so many miracles to cure perishable bodies, will she refuse to assist the souls that have cost her Son so dear, the souls of her own children? Let us go to her with confidence in all our trials and combats, in all our wants, and she will assist and console us.—O my loving Mother, I shall no longer struggle unaided against my enemies, for, placing in thee all my confidence, I will have recourse to thy protection, in order to obtain patience in afflictions and contradictions, and victory over myself and over all the temptations that would make me a slave of sin. Burst asunder all the bonds that keep my heart far away from thee and from thy divine Son.

II. POINT.

How many graces we owe to Mary.

The Order of Mercy, which Mary founded for the redemption of captives, is a feeble image of the Church, to the foundation of which Mary contributed with her divine Son for the redemption of mankind lost and enslaved by sin. When we entered the world we were in the bonds of Satan, carrying the heavy chains of ignorance and sin. "No one comes to the knowledge of truth," says St. Germanus, "except through Mary." It is, then, to the intercession of our amiable Mother, that we owe the grace of baptism. Through her we have passed from darkness to light, from the slavery of hell to the noble liberty of the children of God. O inestimable benefit, which has been for us the principle of favors so precious and so numerous! St. Germanus adds that "no one escapes the danger of being lost, except through Mary." From how many dangers has not the Mother of our soul preserved us since our infancy? From what evils has she not saved us, of which so many of our friends and acquaintances have become the victims? "No one, O Mary," continues the saint, "receives gifts from God, except through thee; no one becomes spiritual and saves his soul, except through thy mediation." The very remorse and salutary fear we were wont to feel when in sin, disgust for the world and the desires to belong to God, were obtained for us from God by the Mother of mercy, for she watched over us, and still does so, as a mother over her children. All these graces come to us, indeed, from Jesus Christ, but through Mary as the channel between Jesus and us.—O my tender Mother, gratitude requires that I should love thee very much, in fact, more than any one, next to Jesus. Inspire me with the courage

to sacrifice all that in me is displeasing to thee, every attachment, my favorite faults which are so hurtful to my progress in virtue. Through the intercession of St. Alphonsus, who, inspired by thee, in thy church burst asunder the bonds that still retained him in the world, deign to burst asunder the bonds of my defects, of my imperfections and of my attachment to the world and to my own self, and enable me to live united to thee and to God, the sovereign Good

St. Michael, Archangel, September 29th.

I. POINT.

“Thou hast made Thy angels spirits, and Thy ministers a burning fire” (Ps. CIII, 4).

Of all created natures, the angelic is the most excellent, in reference to what is above it, that is, to God, whom it approaches more nearly, and represents less imperfectly; and also in reference to what is below it, that is, all corporeal nature. The angel is a pure spirit, immaterial and immortal, acting by the understanding and the will; it acts both interiorly and exteriorly, thus possessing qualities which are so many images of, and traits of resemblance to the Deity; it also has dominion over all the sensible world, thus expressing the sovereignty of God; it is capable of knowing God, of loving and possessing Him, as God knows Himself, loves and possesses Himself. But what was the first return of the faithful angels to Him, whom they recognized as the Author of so many graces; what was their gratitude, their love, their respect, the homage which they rendered to Him! St. Michael, at the head of all, was the first among the seraphim, who attached himself to God, who referred to Him all the glory of his being and of the perfections which he had just received from

Him; and he did so without delay and forever; for, as the apostate angels, turning away from God by an inflexible determination, were perverted and changed into spirits of darkness, of falsehood and malice, the holy angels, on the contrary, consecrating themselves to God, giving themselves to Him by a will, equally free and unchanging, were confirmed in grace for all eternity. O blessed spirits, help us to imitate your prompt and perfect fidelity, your sincere and firm attachment to the Sovereign Good, alone unchanging and eternal.

II. POINT.

“There was a great battle in heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon” (Apoc. XII, 7). St. Michael is called the Prince of the heavenly militia, because he opposed the revolt of Lucifer. This rebel angel, intoxicated with his own excellence, wished to insinuate the same pride in the other angels, and involved the third part of them in his apostasy. With them he raised the standard of revolt against his Creator and his God; but St. Michael, who, by his example and his zeal, kept all the others to their duty, fought at their head, and repressed the audacity of Lucifer and the rebel angels, by these words: “Who is like unto God?” (Ps. LXXXVIII, 7). Words of thunder which precipitated them from the highest heaven into the depths of hell. Our Lord said: “I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven” (Luke X, 18). O awful justice, terrible to the devils! For a single sin of pride, for a sin of a moment, these creatures so noble, so loved by God, were condemned and delivered to eternal flames! No means of doing penance, no support to be expected from the mercy of God, no hope of ever being freed from or relieved in their torments! If I compare the immense multitude of my sins with this single sin

of the rebel angels, into what an abyss ought I to be plunged! O mercy of God, which prevents us from being consumed and hurled a thousand times into hell's avenging flames, mayst Thou be praised forever! O St. Michael, glorious Prince, who by the power of the Most High didst banish pride from heaven, banish it from our hearts, banish self-love, and cause the love of God to reign in its place! Blessed angels, who have triumphed by the grace of Jesus Christ, according to these words: "They have conquered by the blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. XII, 11), obtain that, by the virtue and in the strength of this adorable blood, in which we have been washed and regenerated, and by which we have been filled with a holy inebriation at the altar, we may conquer sin, our passions, our vices, and may gain a glorious victory in ourselves and in others over all the enemies of our salvation.

III. POINT.

Thousands of thousands of angels stand before Him and serve Him (Dan. VII, 10). The faithful angels, having been established and confirmed in grace, entered into the full enjoyment of the beatitude and the clear vision of God. Jesus said: "The angels always behold the face of My Father" (Mat. XVIII, 10). These spirits, pure, not only in their substance, but also in their operations, are continually lifted up and attentive to God; they are in God and always with God, even when they abase themselves to us; and, while being with us, they bear with them everywhere their beatitude and their paradise; they converse with men, only to do good to them, only to bring God into souls, and souls to God. Their life is a model of the Christian and perfect life: for we are obliged to imitate the purity of the angels, since we are created for the same end, to know, to love,

to glorify, to possess God like them and with them in heaven; we ought to enter into their sentiments, and to conform ourselves to them, and since we aspire and are destined to the same happiness, we ought to live on earth, only to merit it. We ought to unite prayer to action, to communicate only with God, or with our neighbor for God's sake, to converse together only to lead each other to God: our conversation should be in heaven, and with its blessed inhabitants (Phil. III, 20). O Jesus, may I behold Thee, may I contemplate Thee, may I look on Thee with a look of love, of gratitude and union, since Thou dost behold me and look upon me always with eyes full of benevolence and mercy!

The Holy Rosary, First Sunday in October.

I. POINT.

Excellence of the prayers of the Rosary.

The sign of the cross by which we begin the rosary reminds us of the great mysteries of the Blessed Trinity—three divine Persons in one God,—of the incarnation and of the redemption, and is, at the same time, a good intention. The Creed, which we next recite, is a profession of faith, which for nineteen centuries passes from mouth to mouth throughout the Christian generations, bringing us unalloyed and genuine the belief of the apostles, Pontiffs, doctors and martyrs, who sealed it with their blood. It is deserving of all our respect and reverence. We may say the same of the “Glory be to the Father” etc., which reminds us that we should perform all our actions for the glory of the most holy and indivisible Trinity. Next come the divinely taught prayers—the Our Father and the Hail Mary. The Our Father, or Lord's prayer, was taught us by our Lord Himself. Being a short and easily remembered formula,

it is replete with instruction, and contains, says Tertullian, the proper manner of honoring God. St. Robert had the highest veneration for it, and could never tire of repeating it, and he did so even in his sleep. After each Our Father the Hail Mary is recited ten times. The Blessed Virgin herself said of it to St. Mechtildis: "Man shall never surpass that salutation. By it God the Father was the first to salute me, and He exempted me by His omnipotence from the fault of Eve. By it the Son of God enlightened me with His infinite wisdom, to make me the brilliant luminary which gives light to heaven and earth, according to the meaning of my name Mary. By it the Holy Ghost, penetrating me with the fulness of His divine sweetness, so filled me with His grace, that those seeking it through me, are sure to find it."—O Blessed Virgin, I will often offer thee the Hail Mary, that heavenly prayer, not only when reciting the rosary, but very often besides during the day; for nothing is more glorious to thee, nor more consoling for us, than that heavenly supplication, which reminds thee of thy grandeur, recalls to us thy benefits, and induces us to honor, invoke and imitate thee.

II. POINT.

Excellence of the mysteries of the Rosary.

The devotion of the rosary comprises not only the recitation of the vocal prayers just indicated, but also the meditation on the fifteen mysteries chosen from the Incarnation of the Word to the Coronation of His Blessed Mother. Divided into three distinct series, they embrace the joys, the sorrows and the glories of Jesus and Mary. By meditating on them we learn to know and appreciate the immense benefit of the restoration of mankind, a benefit which has withdrawn us from the abyss of degradation and sin, to elevate us to a

supernatural and divine life, by which we become children of God and heirs of heaven. We find therein, moreover, the teaching of all the mysteries and the example of all virtues. And these virtues, practised by the two most amiable and exalted of models, become therefore so much the more attractive and easy. Where else, O Lord, can I find so easy and so universal a means of procuring benefit and hastening my progress in virtue? I can in every place, at any time, and even without being noticed by others, with the help of my beads, pray to the Queen of angels, gain her good will, obtain light from her, and strength from her example, and thus acquire evangelical perfection. Thus I can learn to know Jesus and Mary, to know myself by contrast with them, and thus proceed in the way of the saints and of salvation.—O Mary, my loving Mother, inspire me with the resolution of often reciting the rosary by meditating, at one time, on the joyful mysteries, to learn therefrom how to conquer in me pride, selfishness, attachment to the goods of this earth, the insubordination of my judgment and the hardness of my heart concerning the things of God; at another, the sorrowful mysteries, to draw therefrom repentance, the spirit of penance, recollection, resignation and sacrifice; and again, the glorious mysteries, to animate myself with the hope of rising again one day, and of being admitted into heaven, after having here below corresponded to the graces of the Holy Ghost, and served thee faithfully until death, O Queen of the most holy Rosary!

The Holy Guardian Angels, October 2nd.**I. POINT.**

"God hath commanded His angels to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps. XC, 11).

The Providence of God over men appears strikingly in the care, with which He charges His angels to watch for their preservation, to be their guides and their protectors, without being permitted to abandon them, however sinful they may be, in whatever state they may be, so long as they are in this life. The humility, the obedience, and the charity of these heavenly spirits are marvelously conspicuous in the services which they do not refuse to render to men: the order of God attaches them to this, and nothing more is needed to make them do it with joy, because they find all their happiness in obeying God: therefore they are called His ministers (Ps. CII, 21), always attentive to know His will, and prompt to execute it. Their obedience to God is truly perfect, for it has no other motive than the good pleasure of Him, who commands them. Never do they examine His orders; all is alike to them, provided the command of their Creator and their Master is exactly executed, and they execute it themselves with the utmost fidelity. The angel said to Tobias, after having rendered him a thousand services and brought him back to his father's house: "When I was with you, I was there by the will of God; bless ye Him, and sing unto Him. I am Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord. I seemed indeed to eat and drink with you, but I use an invisible meat and drink, which cannot be seen by men" (Tob. XII). And what is this heavenly food, on which these pure spirits feast, if not the contemplation of God in His glory, and the perfect accomplishment of His will? They praise Him un-

ceasingly, and invite us to praise Him; they obey Him, they love Him. O blessed angels, obtain for me grace to do on earth that which you do in heaven. May my thoughts and my eyes be lifted up to God! May it be my happiness to praise Him, to love Him and to prove my love by following His holy will, by never straying from it, by faithfully obeying all His commands!

II. POINT.

The angels, filled with awe, and as if beside themselves at the sight of the infinite majesty of God, stand before His throne, and tremble in His presence (Job XXVI, 11). God's supreme beauty attaches them entirely; they despise all that is not God; they despise themselves, comparing themselves with Him. Thus they teach us to esteem only God, to detach ourselves from all else, to despise ourselves and to destroy pride, which ruined the first of the angels; they teach us to say often: "Who is like unto God?" (Ps. LXXXVIII, 7). Who can prefer himself to Him without an abominable apostasy? Who can be compared to Him without a detestable injustice? The humility of the angels appears also in the submission which they render to the superior angels, by whose ministry God manifests His orders, and, above all, by the joy, with which they descend to us. An angel, capable of directing a whole world, is satisfied with the guidance of a single soul, even the most unworthy; he does not disdain the greatest sinners and the least worthy of his care. May we, dust and ashes as we are, learn this day by your example, O blessed spirits, to submit, to obey every creature (1 Pet. II, 13), to abase and humble ourselves profoundly.

III. POINT.

The charity of the angels towards us is so much the greater and more admirable, as they are the more

exalted above us. They surpass us in strength, in knowledge, in wisdom, in power, in glory; yet the services which we receive from them, and through them, are innumerable. Always attentive to our welfare, they guard our bodies and our souls, and preserve us for this life and for the next from a thousand evils which they avert from us with constant care. They are the soldiers of the armies of God; they defend us, combat for us, repress the efforts of Satan, and render his fury powerless. They are the lamps of the house of God, enlightening us in our doubts, guiding us in our way, aiding us in our undertakings, rousing us from the sleep of sin, urging, moving, soliciting us to do good. They present our prayers to God, obtain His graces for us, and, through their holy ministry, we receive them more abundantly. Holy Scripture is full of the details of all these services, which the angels render to men. But if they do so much for us, what return have they not a right to expect? Respect, confidence, gratitude, are duties which we cannot refuse to them, without injustice; but what they demand above all things, is that we should listen to their voice, that we should follow their counsels, that we should abandon ourselves entirely to their guidance. As they demand this only for our own good, to refuse to grant it would be to hate ourselves.

St. Francis of Assisi, October 4th.

I. POINT.

*“If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”*

(Luke IX, 23.)

These words, addressed by Jesus Christ to all men, made a deep impression on the heart of Francis. To put them in practice, he embraced a life of penance

which excited the astonishment of the age, and which is a marvel of the mighty power of grace. A clear light from above began to enlighten him in regard to the greatness of God and his own nothingness; and in proportion as he penetrated into the two-fold abyss of the holiness of God and the misery of man, he found consolation only in tears. The more he knew God, the more he knew himself, and the more also he wept, and, not ceasing to advance in this double knowledge, which was an inexhaustible source of tears, he spent the days and the nights in exclaiming at the feet of Jesus Christ: "Who art Thou, Lord, and who am I?" He regarded himself as the most unworthy of sinners, although God had always preserved him in innocence. Having so low an opinion of himself, he could never consent to allow himself to be raised to the dignity of the priesthood, and he found consolation and repose only in contempt, humiliation and opprobrium. God had chosen him to confound and destroy self-love by perfect evangelical abnegation, by humility and simplicity of spirit, by a multiplicity of actions more admirable than imitable, but, above all, by the establishment of an Order which triumphs over all the pride of the world and of hell. O great disciple of the humility of Jesus Christ, tear from our hearts worldly pride, and implant in them a profound humility, of which thou didst give us such wonderful examples!

II. POINT.

St. Francis, dead to the world, stripped of all self-love, added to the most perfect evangelical renunciation a holy hatred of himself. He continually crucified the old man, practising incredible austerities, together with a general and universal mortification, leading a kind of life extremely hard and even unexampled. Thus he

offered himself unceasingly to Jesus crucified as a victim of penance and love: therefore he became so perfect an imitator of our Divine Saviour, that he merited to bear His image exteriorly by the impression of His sacred wounds. He received the sacred stigmata in his hands, in his feet and in his side, through the medium of a seraph, and, at the same time, a sublime communication of the most ardent charity and seraphic love, so that he belonged no more to earth, conversed no more with men, and could say truly with his good Master: "I am not of this world" (John XVII, 14), and with St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. VI, 14); "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. VI, 17); I am fastened with Him to the cross, and I place all my glory in it and in its ignominy.

III. POINT.

Could St. Francis, so united to Jesus Christ crucified, and transformed into Him in so holy a manner, attach himself to the fleeting and perishable goods of this world? God had given them to him in abundance; but the humble saint sacrificed them. He feared them, regarded them as the fatal source of iniquity, abandoned them entirely, to follow and imitate more perfectly Him, who, being infinitely rich, became not only poor, but even indigent for us, in order to enrich us through His poverty (2 Cor. VIII, 9). Thus, with the Sovereign Creator and for love of Him, St. Francis embraced the most austere poverty, and made it the inheritance of his Order. We cannot say enough of the respect due to his Order, because of its contempt of all that men prize most here below. The austerity of his pious children terrifies the world and excites horror, but their holy life and their evangelical labors win for them the

love and veneration of the people. Blessed are the poor, for God becomes their treasure! He considers our hearts as precious vessels; He wishes to empty them of all the false goods of earth, only to fill them with real goods, with those goods which we shall take away, or rather which we shall bring with us to heaven. Therefore Jesus Christ, who pronounces these words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit", immediately adds: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat, V, 3).—O Jesus, who didst choose to be born, to live and to die in the most abject poverty, King and Model of the voluntary poor, grant, by the intercession of thy humble and perfect disciple, that, detached from all love of created goods, we may say to Thee unceasingly with him: Thou art the God of my heart, Thou art the only portion which I have chosen forever (Ps. LXXII, 26).

St. Bruno, October 6th.

I. POINT.

"The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to decline from the ruin of death" (Prov. XIV, 27).

St. Bruno, penetrated with the fear of God and of His awful judgments, separated himself from the world and from all his friends and acquaintances. According to some writers this happy determination was taken on the occasion of the frightful apparition of a proud doctor, who, after his death, by divine permission, thrice proclaimed his own condemnation. He was seen raising his head from his coffin, saying at different times with a lamentable voice: I have been accused at the judgment of God; I have been judged; I am condemned by a sentence equally frightful and irrevocable. This spectacle chilled with terror all who were present; but Bruno was so deeply moved, that he left the world. Together

with six of his friends, whom he associated with him, he shut himself up in the horrible desert of La Chartreuse of Grenoble, there to live safe from the occasions of sin, and to avoid by penance the severity of the inevitable judgment. Whatever was the cause of his retreat from the world, for we do not know with certainty the motive which determined him to change his life, we may, however, believe that it was the apprehension of being lost and of losing God, which led him to the desert. O holy fear of God, gift of the Holy Ghost, which filled the soul of this great saint, and produced such marvelous effects in him and in his order, pierce my heart and my flesh (Ps. CXVIII, 120). O Lord, with Thy prophet may I tremble at the sight of Thy judgments, and may I always consider how terrible and "horrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. X, 31).

II. POINT.

"I have gone far off, flying away; and I abode in the wilderness" (Ps. LIV, 8). St. Bruno, executing his generous design, retired and shut himself up in the desert, there to begin a life more angelic than human. Chosen by God to honor the interior life of Jesus Christ, and to cause it to be honored by many others, he followed the inspirations of the divine Spirit, who often led the Saviour to the mountains, to retired places, to the desert. Like Jesus Christ and so many holy anchorites who followed Christ's example, he fled from the sight of men, and taught a multitude of saints to retire also, to live unknown, to die to themselves, to the world, to all its comforts, to find their happiness here below in silence, in enclosure, and in continual mortification. Do not the worthy children of St. Bruno still live in this manner to-day? They are heavenly men,

or rather earthly agents, whose conversation is in heaven. Blessed are they, who are not satisfied simply to admire their virtue, but who imitate it as far as they can, according to their state. Blessed are they, who often steal away from the noise and tumult of the world, to occupy themselves in the peace and tranquillity of a heart detached and recollected, with the one thing necessary (Luke X, 42), the affair of their salvation, to which all others should be referred.

III. POINT.

“You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ Jesus in God” (Col. III, 3). Who has proved the truth of these words more admirably than St. Bruno? He, as it were, buried himself alive in the desert, as in a tomb; he not only renounced the society of men, but even succeeded in raising himself above human nature. Fasts, watchings, sack-cloth, and all the austerities which he practised without intermission, crucified in him all that remained of natural inclinations, and the manner in which he treated his body savored more of death than of life. But for this earthly and corporal life, which he immolated to God by continual mortification, he substituted a heavenly life, spiritual, interior, and “hidden in God with Christ”; his soul was always lifted up to God by the contemplation of His greatness, by the celebration of His praises and by prayer day and night. He spent many nights ravished and transported, considering this one word: O infinite Goodness!—Therefore, by the divine unction of His grace, by chaste and holy delights, God indemnified him for all the pleasures which he had given up for love of Him. This great saint and his holy disciples, from the depth of their frightful solitude, their eternal silence, and their severe austerities, may say to us as he said formerly to

those of his time: You see our crosses, but you do not feel the divine and superabundant consolations which accompany them and render them even more delightful than your pleasures. But what can better prove this truth, than the constancy and unchanging firmness of these holy religious in their primitive fervor, and in their first manner of living, which they preserve so carefully, and the least observances of which they practise so exactly. Their attachment to their duties, as glorious as it is unchanging, edifies the Church, and gives to all the faithful, especially to religious souls, a perfect model of fidelity and perseverance in good.

St. Teresa, October 15th.

I. POINT.

"I will sing forever the mercies of the Lord."

(Ps. LXXXVIII, 2.)

These words were often in the mouth of the great saint whom the Church honors this day. Penetrated with the goodness of God towards her, she could not be comforted for her inability to correspond to it, except by the blessed hope of perpetuating her gratitude and her thanks throughout the boundless extent of eternity. The first mark of goodness which Teresa received from God was a grace of preservation, a grace by which God, to preserve His saints from falling, removes the stumbling-blocks which they meet with, and averts the occasions of sin. This grace should induce us to give thanks to God, says St. Augustine, for the good that we have done, and for the evil from which we have been preserved. There is not a saint, who cannot, and who ought not to say with David: It is Thou, O Lord, who "hast delivered my soul from the lower hell" (Ps. LXXXV, 13). "Unless the Lord had

been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell” (Ps. XCIII, 17). St. Teresa bears striking testimony to this truth, when she says, in speaking of herself, that God had shown her the place which she would have occupied in hell, if His mercy had not revealed it to her, and in doing this, He gave her the grace of preservation of which we are here speaking. God did not deliver her from sin, for she had the happiness never to commit a mortal sin; but, although engaged in vanity and love of the world, which would naturally lead her to sin, He always prevented her from falling. Jealous of her heart, He supported her on the verge of the precipice, by a second grace, which changed her and separated her forever from the vain attractions of the world, from dangerous occasions, from the superfluity and multiplicity of creatures, to draw her and attach her irrevocably to the Creator. O Jesus, powerful Deliverer of Thy saints, who didst draw Thy chaste lover from the frivolous friendships of the world to Thy most pure love, sever our bonds, break our chains asunder, form happier ones, which will bind us and attach us to Thee forever.

II. POINT.

“I will espouse thee to Me in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and in faith” (Osee II, 19, 20). Our Lord, wishing to accomplish this promise in St. Teresa, chose her, by a special predilection, as His spouse, saying to her one day: Thou shalt be My spouse, and I shall be thine; I shall be all thine, and thou wilt be all Mine. The divine Sun of Justice, to prepare her for so glorious a union, imparted a new light to her mind to dispel its darkness; He purified her heart not only from all stains of sin, but also from all the imperfections of nature and self-love. He told

her one day, that He wished her to profit by His blood, and another time, that she should have no more relations with mankind, and should converse only with the angels. But that she might attain more certainly to this high degree of perfection, He adorned and enriched her soul with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Through prayer He communicated Himself to her more abundantly. He rewarded her perseverance in this holy exercise, notwithstanding the aridity which she long endured, by an extraordinary facility in prayer, and by the ineffable consolations with which He filled her soul; through prayer she acquired all the virtues in an eminent degree,—humility, obedience, charity, but, above all, that fervent love of God and that ardent zeal for His glory, which led her to make the great vow, to do always that which she believed to be the most perfect and the most pleasing in His sight. This made her undertake and execute the reformation of her Order, which has given to God so many chaste and holy spouses, so many zealous and fervent ministers, who, living in strict solitude an austere and penitent life, as their holy foundress marked for them, obtain, by their prayers and the holiness of their life, the graces of heaven for the salvation of souls.

III. POINT.

“Love is as strong as death” (Cant. VIII, 6). St. Teresa, wounded by divine love, had no joy or satisfaction on earth but to procure the glory of God at the cost of her rest, her health, and even her life. In fact, the life which she led, was a series of incredible austerities; her illness and her delicate health never interrupted them. As she desired only to suffer, she added new trials to all those which Providence sent her. She often exclaimed in the transports of a holy fervor: “To suffer

or to die." During nineteen years what did she not endure from disgust, aridity, darkness, and weariness in prayer, without ever permitting herself to shorten in the least the time destined to it. The extraordinary graces with which our Lord favored her, were another source of trial; they were treated as illusions, and attributed to the devil, who, it was said, deceived her ignorant and proud mind; and, although she had an interior assurance that all these graces came from God, she, nevertheless, trembled and was in cruel perplexity and uncertainty. What humiliations, what rebuffs did she not meet with in the foundation of her monasteries! How often her reputation was attacked and blackened by calumnies, and her designs thwarted and almost overthrown by the malice of hell! Yet she was sustained, in the midst of so many storms, by a courage more than human, which made her place all her confidence in God. By her efforts how many temples were erected to her Spouse Jesus Christ! How many asylums were established by souls moved by His love! How many conversions due to her examples, to her good works, to her fervent prayers! It was especially by the ardent desire with which her heart was filled, to win the whole universe to her Spouse, that God made her triumph. Penetrated with the most bitter sorrow, when she considered the great number of heretics and sinners by whom He was so much offended, she often exclaimed before her daughters: Since our sex does not permit us to seek these stray sheep, let us at least labor for their conversion by our tears and our sighs. If we are not happy enough to form for God new adorers, to procure for Him new servants, let us, at least, employ all our power to give Him in ourselves true and faithful ones, who will adore Him in spirit and in truth.—

Indeed, this seraphic soul in her actions, in her words, in her writings, breathed only for God and the advancement of His kingdom; everything else was indifferent to her. She was dead to the world, and she lived only in Jesus Christ, in His love and His life. O great saint, He who is mighty and whose Name is holy (Luke I, 49), has done great things in thee and by thee; pour upon us of thy fulness, and obtain, by thy intercession, that we may grow unceasingly in the knowledge and love of Him, whom thou didst love so tenderly, so efficaciously and so constantly.

St. Ursula, October 21st.

I. POINT.

“After her virgins shall be brought to the King.”

(Ps. XLIV, 15.)

These words applied in a proper and special sense to the august Mother of God, may be, to a certain extent, applied to St. Ursula; in fact, this saint, walking in the steps of the Virgin of virgins, imitated her in her purity, and even, in a certain sense, in her blessed fecundity; for her virginity was fruitful, since she had no sooner resolved to consecrate herself to God, than she excited a similar zeal and desire in the eleven thousand virgins who followed her, and who regarded and revered her as their mother and mistress. And how many does she not still offer to God every day, in the Congregation established under her name, and so full of pure virgins, who spread the good odor of Jesus Christ in all parts of the Church, insinuating into the hearts of her children a love for this angelic virtue, a virtue which every one should honor and practise according to his state and the spirit of his vocation.— O great saint, whose example has worked so many won-

ders, grant that, by thy powerful and efficacious protection, we may obtain the grace of perfect purity of soul and body.

II. POINT.

The virginity of St. Ursula and her holy companions inspired not only purity, but also fervor, courage and the desire of martyrdom. These virgins, having unhappily fallen into the hands of barbarians, had the fortitude, animated by the exhortations and example of St. Ursula, to endure death rather than lose their chastity; they did not fear to give their life to preserve the love, the faith and the fidelity which they had vowed to the Spouse of pure souls, Jesus Christ our Lord; having become His spouses, and having renounced all earthly nuptials, they merited by a glorious death to be admitted to the eternal nuptials of the Divine Lamb, and to "follow Him whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. XIV, 4). O wise virgins, who preferred eternity to time; who with heavenly prudence changed the obstacles to salvation into so many means to attain it; who willingly endured a few moments of trial, to obtain a crown which would last forever; who sacrificed a short and perishable life, to acquire true life, the only life worthy of the name; assist us at the hour of death and at the present moment, that following your holy examples, we may honor your martyrdom, by constantly mortifying our passions and our vices, making the faith and love of Jesus Christ triumph in us, enduring all, suffering all, even death itself rather than fail in the respect and love, which we owe to Him.

III. POINT.

It is a high vocation to be called by God, to co-operate in the effects of His predestination for His elect, to be, as it were, His aids in the sanctification of

souls. Such a grace was granted to St. Ursula, and is so well recognized by the Church, that a numerous company of virgins have ranged themselves under her banner. These spouses of Jesus Christ hope that, being directed and guided by this great saint, animated by her example and sustained by her prayers, they will bring up in the fear and love of God the young souls confided to their care, sowing in their hearts the seed of His holy word, of His grace and of the divine truths, teaching them the science of the saints, to render them capable of serving God and saving themselves, inspiring them with holy habits of all the virtues, and serving them as visible angels, to lead them on in the way to heaven, and to cause them to produce fruits of eternal life. Such are the continual exercises, the vocation and the employment of the Congregation of St. Ursula; such is the end to which it aspires. This pious Order labors unceasingly, with an apostolic spirit and unflagging zeal, to form to God worthy spouses, to people the monasteries with holy religious, and to educate for the world pious and truly Christian women. O blessed saint, aid from heaven these virgins, who endeavor to follow and imitate thee; second their care and their efforts, and grant, that we may be found worthy to contribute to the salvation of souls by our prayers and our good examples.

St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles, October 28th.

I. POINT.

“If you had been of the world, the world would love its own.” (John XV, 19.)

The life of the apostles St. Simon and St. Jude was unknown to the world, and “hidden in God with Christ” (Col. III, 3); they had life only in Him and by Him,

they were rich with His fulness, and animated with His spirit, and as our body lives by the soul, so they lived by the principle of the grace, of the life and the spirit of Jesus. Their life was conformed to His, it was an image of His, and what an abyss of grace, of life, of virtues, of wonders veiled under His apparent weakness, in His infancy, in His poor and solitary life, during the space of thirty years, in all the sufferings and humiliations of His Passion! Thus the life, the labors, the actions of the holy apostles have remained in obscurity and forgotten by men: all that we know of them, is only the least part of what is hidden from us. This conduct of God teaches us that, the more we belong to Him and are loved by Him, the more also we ought to seek to be unknown to the world, to be known to Him alone. "All things are vanity; every man living" (Ps. XXXVIII, 6); the esteem of men has nothing solid or lasting; their judgment is false and deceitful. Therefore Jesus, seeing His disciples filled with joy, because the devils were subject to them, said to them: "Rejoice not that the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke X, 20); a grace unknown to men, a glory hidden from their eyes, the only one which it is lawful for us to desire!

II. POINT.

"The world hateth you, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John XV, 19). St. Simon and St. Jude lived, not only unknown to the world, but despised, hated and condemned by men: this is the portion which Jesus chose, which the apostles loved in imitation of Him, and which we ought to recognize and honor in the Master and in His disciples; for they were regarded as men of low degree,

they were persecuted, subjected to all kinds of opprobrium, and, finally, immolated, by a cruel death, to the glory and for the faith of Jesus Christ. To them these words of St. Paul are especially applicable: We are as persons condemned to death, we endure hunger, thirst, nakedness, and ill-treatment, we have no fixed abode; we labor with our hands, with much weariness; we are cursed and we bless; we are persecuted and we endure it; we are insulted, and we answer by prayers; we have become the refuse of the world, and the offscourings of the people (1 Cor. IV, 9). O apostolic life, unknown to men, but known to God, despised by worldlings, but esteemed by the angels, low and humble exteriorly, but excellent, precious and most worthy interiorly, like the ancient Tabernacle, covered with coarse skins, but enriched with most pure gold within (Exod. XXVI, 14). For the glory, the beauty and the perfection of the soul are in the heart (Ps. XLIV, 14), the secrets and depths of which God penetrates. Who will not say with St. Paul: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. I, 10). I have despised all things of the world, and I have regarded the things of the earth as filth and rubbish, that I may win the favor of the Divine Saviour; and it matters little to me, whether men judge me for good or evil (1 Cor. IV, 3), because I am not of this world (John XVII, 14).

III. POINT.

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (Jude I, 1). Such is the august title in which the apostles glory, and after them apostolic and truly Christian men; it is a more exalted character to be the least servant and the lowest slave in the house of God, than to be the first and the greatest in the palaces of kings: therefore the royal prophet, who was according

to the heart of God and filled with His spirit, exclaimed: "I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. LXXXIII, 11). My glory is to be Thy servant, O Lord, and the son of Thy servant (Ps. CXV, 16). This name belongs especially to the apostles, for as the angels of heaven are called the ministers or servants, who execute the will of God, so the holy apostles are the angels of earth, because they serve God in the order of grace, according to the eternal predestination, for the conversion and salvation of the world. The two saints whose feast we celebrate to-day, were brothers of St. James, and very near relatives of Jesus; as such, they were among the first in His holy family; they had a corresponding zeal for His service, and received a special power to win souls to Him. O glorious apostles, may the mercy, the peace and charity which you so earnestly desired, be poured out upon us (Jude I, 2); "may the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. I, 3), may His Son, who is our peace, and may the Holy Ghost, who is all love, and by whom "charity is poured into our hearts" (Rom. V, 5), receive us through you, that, being consecrated by baptism to the service and glory of the Most Holy Trinity, we may attach ourselves to it anew by a donation voluntary, irrevocable and perfect.

Feast of All Saints, November 1st.

I. POINT.

Rejoice in persecutions and sufferings, because a very great reward awaits you in heaven.

(*Mat. V, 12.*)

Our existence is divided into two lives: the present life, which is short and passing, the future life, which is eternal and will never have an end: the latter will

correspond to the former, and will be its sequel and just recompense. For some the future life will be a life unhappy and like a continual death, or a living death, because their torments will be without interruption, without alleviation, and without end. For others, it will be a life gloriously immortal and eternally blessed; as these latter will have participated in the humble and suffering life of Jesus, so they will share in His glorious life; for Jesus is the model of all the predestined, who receive from Him, in imitating Him, their grace and their glory. St. John says: "We have seen Him here below on earth, full of grace and truth, . . . and we have all received of His fulness" (John I, 14 and 16). In heaven we shall contemplate Him full of glory, as the only-begotten Son and the splendor of the Father. Jesus, in the days of His mortal flesh, was suffering and enjoying, suffering as a pilgrim, sharing our infirmities, enjoying, because He possessed the intuitive vision of the blessed. For His soul, from the moment of its creation having been united to the divinity, saw God in His essence: it was glorious and filled with the beatific joy, and this joy, this glory continued amidst His labors, His trials, His anguish and His last sufferings on the Cross. Let us adore in Jesus this ineffable union of heavenly pleasures with the greatest sufferings—a union of which He renders His saints partakers here below; for faith which sustains them, hope which animates them, charity which inflames them, enable them to find holy delights in the severest austerities of penance, and even in the most cruel tortures; the joy of the spirit which charity pours into their hearts, seems to render them insensible to all that the malice of men and the rage of hell can invent against them. We are filled with joy, says St. Paul, in the hope of being one day

admitted to the glory of the children of God (Rom. V, 2). The saints regard heaven as the "reward exceeding great", which awaits them, and, saluting it from afar, they remain, like Moses, firm and unshaken, notwithstanding the afflictions of this life, in the faithful accomplishment of the divine laws: and because they have followed Jesus to Calvary, they accompany Him also into heaven; there He is in the midst of them as a sun amid the stars; they look upon Him without growing weary, and without ever being turned away from Him; they revere Him, they adore Him, they love Him, they render eternal thanks to Him, recognizing Him as the Author of all their happiness, to whom alone belongs all the glory of their virtue. What a happiness to see our Lord in His majesty, surrounded by all His saints, to be always occupied with Him, to dwell with Him and to possess Him without fear of losing Him. O Lord, when shall I come, when shall I behold this great vision, "when shall I appear before Thy face?" (Ps. XLI, 3).

II. POINT.

As God, according to St. Denis, is better known by the way of negation, than by that of affirmation, so the glory, the beatitude of the saints, which has God for its source, its object and its fulness, may be better expressed by saying what it is not, than by trying to explain what it is. Therefore Isaias assures us, and after him St. Paul: that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive those things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (Is. LXIV, 4; 1 Cor. II, 9), that is, that this glory is not what strikes the imagination or the senses, or what can be expressed by eloquence, or conceived by the understanding; all this is much

below our sovereign good,—that good which is God Himself. What we may perceive in our gloomy darkness, and say, notwithstanding our ignorance, is that the beatitude of heaven is an assemblage of all kinds of goods, more excellent than all earthly goods. God promised it to Moses, saying: “I will show thee all good” (Exod. XXXIII, 19). Eternal beatitude is a good which comprises all goods, and which excludes all evils; it is health without change, repose without labor, joy without sadness, a treasure of riches without poverty, the height of honor and glory without humiliation and without contempt; it is a pleasure without sorrow, a day without night, an enjoyment without privation, a liberty without constraint, a security without fear; and if freedom from all misfortune is the best part of happiness, what will be that of the saints, when God shall have wiped all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor mourning, nor sorrow, for these things will have passed away, and only the essential Good will remain. “Behold I make all things new” (Apoc. XXI, 4, 5). Who will not sigh with St. Paul, to be “delivered from this body of death”? (Rom. VII, 24). When shall I leave it to go to Thee, O Lord? “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name” in the company of the just (Ps. CXLI, 8).

III. POINT.

Finally, eternal beatitude is a sort of deification, according to St. Teresa. This word, which contains a great meaning, expresses three degrees: the first is a perfect conformity of heart, of love, and of will with God, which makes the saints have no desires outside of the eternal rule of the will of God; therefore Jesus requires us to ask that His “will may be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mat. VI, 10). The second degree

is perfect uniformity of mind and sentiment between the blessed and God. "If he, who is joined to the Lord, is one same spirit with Him (1 Cor. VI, 17) by grace, how much more will he be, through the effect and the union of glory! This was Christ's prayer: "That they may be one in Us, as We are one" (John XVII, 22), not only in love and will, but also in thought, in sentiment and in spirit; so that the blessed soul is entirely incapable of thinking or judging contrary to the designs of God, or of making the least opposition to His holy will. The third degree, as it were, deifies the soul by its immediate union with the divinity, which St. Paul expresses in these words: "God will be all in us" (1 Cor. XV, 28). A sponge in the sea is less saturated by its waters, a red hot iron less inflamed by the fire, a crystal less penetrated by the rays of the sun, than the blessed soul is filled, loaded and penetrated to the very depths of its being, with the Divinity itself and its eternal splendor. It is in this possession, in this fulness of God, that beatitude essentially consists; therefore, He will say to the faithful servant: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. XXV, 21;) for the joy, the glory will be so great and so incomprehensible, that the soul will not be capable of receiving and containing them; but it must enter into God, it must, as it were, be lost and annihilated in the abyss of His greatness, and be transformed into His light, and entirely deified, as it were, in Him. O my God, may I begin on earth to enjoy this intimate union with Thee, that I may merit to enjoy its glorious and perfect consummation in heaven.

All Souls' Day, November 2nd.**I. POINT.**

"We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."
(2 Cor. I, 10.)

Among the souls who leave this life, those who are entirely purified both from the guilt and the penalty of sin, as children after baptism and martyrs for the faith, fly directly to heaven; others, guilty of unrepented mortal sin, are precipitated without delay into the depths of hell; finally, many, restored to favor with God by penance, but still in debt to His justice for the penalties due to sins which they have not sufficiently expiated, and as yet unworthy of glory, because "nothing defiled can enter into heaven" (Apoc. XXI, 27), are condemned to the prison of purgatory, from which they shall not go forth, till they have paid all their debt to the divine justice (Mat. XVIII, 34). Woe to those cowardly souls who, to spare themselves here below light and momentary pains, have drawn upon themselves those which are eternal and intolerable! Blessed, on the contrary, are they who have understood and experienced, how sweet it is to bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, and to suffer for Him. They now rejoice with Him, and this forever! But let us compassionate the souls who, passing from the body in the state of grace, are excluded from glory for a time, in order to be purified by pains and sufferings so terrible, that all the pains and sufferings of this life united together give only a faint idea of them. These pains and sufferings, however long and grievous they may be, expiate the past, but without increasing merit, or procuring the least degree of grace or glory. What a sorrow for them the thought that, by light penitential exercises, they could have amassed eternal riches, and rendered them-

selves worthy to glorify and love God more purely and perfectly throughout eternity, and that they neglected to do so. Let us pray for these souls, let us profit by their sad experience, and labor and do good while we have time (Gal. VI, 10), and while no moment of our labor will remain without a reward. Let us remember that "on whatever side the tree falleth, there it shall remain" (Eccles. XI, 3); that we shall have neither time nor means to raise it up, and that the moment of our death will decide our eternal fate, without appeal and without return.

II. POINT.

The souls in purgatory suffer two kinds of pains; that of privation and that of the senses. The first, which is the most dreadful, is the privation of the sight of God: this pain is in proportion to the knowledge which they have of Him, and to their love: a love so great, that if heaven were open to them, they would prefer to cast themselves into the flames, rather than appear before God with the least stain of sin; so that, according to the opinion of some saints, they, of their own accord, precipitate themselves into purgatory, through a lively feeling of the goodness and holiness of God, and through their great love for Him. This, however, in no way diminishes their pains, for love itself makes them suffer; and the greater their love, the more grievous is their sorrow in being deprived of God. They have an inexpressible desire to be united to Him and transformed into Him by glory; but, seeing that their happiness is retarded by their own fault, this privation is a suffering more insupportable than all their other torments. Therefore, if they could find greater sufferings to remove these obstacles, they would embrace them through their ardent desire to see God. As to the

pains of the senses, they are very great, and beyond all that we can express or conceive. All imaginable torments of this life, and all that the malice and cruelty of tyrants have ever invented, are nothing in comparison with the raging fire which penetrates them, and burns them without consuming them, purifying them as gold in the crucible (Prov. XVII, 3), until it has reduced them to the utmost degree of purity, that they may be worthy to appear before God. O severe expiation demanded by the divine justice, which is made by the fire of purgatory in the other life! But, O sweet penance, which, by the mercy of God, may be accomplished in this life by the fire of holy love, as in St. Magdalen, of whom our Lord said, that many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much (Luke VII, 47).

III. POINT.

The sufferings of the souls in purgatory bear a great resemblance to those of Jesus. The Divine Saviour saw three hands of God weighing upon Him, if we may use the expression: the hand of His greatness which humbled Him; that of His justice which wounded Him, finally, that of His holiness, the heaviest and the most severe, which bruised and crushed Him, according to the expression of the prophet (Is. LIII, 5). Of this last He complains by the mouth of Job: "The hand of the Lord hath touched Me" (Job XIX, 21). Holiness is the most awful of all the divine perfections; it cannot bear the shadow, or even the appearance of sin, and it is that which most afflicted Jesus on the Cross: therefore the souls in purgatory are, at one and the same time, humbled by the greatness of God, tormented by His justice and oppressed by His holiness. O Jesus, pour forth some drops of Thy precious blood to refresh them in their flames, since they have, and can have,

recourse only to Thee, and can derive assistance only from Thy merits. These souls love Thee, they are in Thy grace, and submissive to Thy rigorous orders. Allow Thyself to be moved in their favor; grant that we may now imitate their patience, and, as far as possible, their blessed inability to offend Thee.

St. Stanislaus Kostka, November 13th.

I. POINT.

Spirit of prayer of St. Stanislaus.

This young saint, forestalled by the divine blessings, was wont, at the early age of six years, to prolong his mental prayer beyond four or five hours on his knees, bathed in tears and his soul absorbed in God. Sent to prosecute his studies to the university of Vienna, he led a life of seclusion from the world, fasting on the eve of his communion days, and spending a part of the nights in prayer. Always united to God, he practised constant recollection, unmoved by the solicitations and examples of his brother, who wished to make him lead a worldly and dissipated life. His conversation was in heaven, and to those who upbraided him for leading a life so unlike that of other young nobles, he was wont to answer: "I am born for eternity, and not for the pleasures of this world." Hence prayer was the source of his perfect detachment from everything earthly, and it also obtained for him the strength necessary to bear the cruel persecution of his brother for the space of two whole years. His brother feared not to insult, ill-treat and even beat him, to compel him to join him in his vain and dangerous pleasures. But Stanislaus remained steadfast. His unalterable meekness and patience were the precious fruits of his intimate union with Jesus crucified and the Mother of sorrows. His love of prayer

also obtained for him most singular favors. Being dangerously sick, and not being able to have a priest to administer the holy Viaticum to him, he prayed to St. Barbara not to let him die without this blessing. The saint, appearing to him in company with two angels, gave him holy Communion, which he received with inexpressible fervor and joy. When he was believed about to breathe his last, the Queen of heaven appeared to him, holding the divine Infant, whom she placed on the bed of Stanislaus, and he soon recovered his health. Do we love prayer as St. Stanislaus did? Do we make our meditations so as to derive fruit from them, and to be detached from worldly goods and pleasures, and to bear our daily trials?—O Jesus, through the prayers of Thy loving Mother and of St. Stanislaus, grant me the grace to derive greater profit from my meditations, and help me always to make them with recollection and earnestness.

II. POINT.

Fidelity of St. Stanislaus to divine grace.

The Blessed Virgin having assured him of his vocation to the Society of Jesus, young Stanislaus, faithful to the divine call, did not hesitate to undertake on foot and without means a journey of 1800 miles. When he reached Rome, that city of art and wonders, he betook himself directly to the Jesuit noviciate. His fervor there was so great, that none of his companions could rival him therein. Insensible to esteem and praise, he loved abjection and delighted in the most humble tasks, and would have wished to monopolize for himself all the reproofs and humiliations. Although he had preserved his baptismal innocence and was an angel in the flesh, he was insatiable for mortifications, and strove to practise austerity, as if he had been some

great criminal. God alone was his treasure. Entirely addicted to recollection, prayer and self-denial, he most punctually obeyed his superiors and observed his rules. His fidelity deserved for him the gift of divine love; he had often to temper with cold water the fire of divine love that consumed his heart. His devotion to Mary was boundless, and it was in the most touching tones that he called her his Mother. He died, as he had longed for, on the feast of her Assumption; hardly eighteen years old, he had already acquired consummate sanctity. We also could already be great saints, had we, as he was, been docile and faithful to the light of the Holy Ghost.—But, O Jesus, how unfaithful I am! I seek perfection, but I wish to do it in my own way, being unwilling to give up my ease and comfort and to practise self-denial. O Jesus, change my heart, grant that I may be docile to grace, watchful over myself, ever ready to overcome my evil inclinations and to make every sacrifice Thou demandest of me. Grant that I may always be faithful in little things, that I may seek to please Thee alone, and that I may, through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother and of St. Stanislaus, obtain the grace of final perseverance.

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, November 21st.

I. POINT.

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke I, 38).

These words were pronounced by the Blessed Virgin at the moment of her elevation to the divine maternity; but she had already addressed them to God from the bottom of her heart, when she offered herself to Him to serve Him in His temple. Her pious parents, the depositories of this treasure of heaven, took her there, through an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to return her

to God, from whom they had received her, and to accomplish the vow which they had made, to consecrate her to His divine Majesty. Mary, animated by the Holy Ghost, felt an interior joy and an incredible delight. She said within herself: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we will go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. CXXI, 1). With marvelous eagerness and fervor she ascended the steps of the temple, because she had prepared in her heart mysterious steps to rise from virtue to virtue, in order to see the God of gods in Sion (Ps. LXXXIII, 8), or rather, to receive Him in her virginal womb. In the very first moments of her life she prostrated herself before God, and offered herself as a holocaust to His greatness, adoring Him profoundly; to His holiness, before which she deeply humbled herself, and to His divine love, to the power of which she abandoned herself entirely; thus she consecrated herself as a victim to the glory of these three eternal perfections of God, which made in her soul marvelous impressions of respect, of sanctification, of gratitude and love. To-day is, therefore, a day of presentation, of offering and sacrifice, in which we ought to join to the holocaust of this pure Virgin that of our heart, renewing the promises and the consecration of our baptism, and offering ourselves to God under the auspices and in imitation of Mary, promptly, entirely, and irrevocably.

II. POINT.

The oblation of the Blessed Virgin on this day was not only more worthy and more acceptable than any which had ever been offered to God during the shadows of the Old Law, but more than any which in after ages could be offered by any other pure creature; for her body and her soul were together the victim which she

presented to Him, a holy victim, living and truly worthy to please the divine Majesty. Mary, who was the purest of virgins, was also the most cherished by God, the one on whom His eyes rested with the greatest complacency and love. St. Paul says, that a virgin thinks only of the things of the Lord, and of becoming holy in body and mind, in order to please Him (1 Cor. VII, 4). Mary, pre-eminently the Blessed Virgin, had no care and aspired to nothing, during the eleven years of her sojourn in the temple, but to become more and more pleasing to God, and to grow unceasingly in virtue and holiness. This is the only care worthy of a Christian, and, above all, of a soul consecrated to God! But who could enter into the sanctuary of the heart of Mary, and discover there the ineffable dispositions of humility, resignation and love, with which she accompanied and perpetuated her voluntary sacrifice? "The Lord had respect (first) to Abel, and (then) to his offerings" (Gen. IV, 4), that is, He has more regard for our hearts than for our hands, for our affection than for our gifts. Upon this principle, the sacrifice of Mary was doubly acceptable to God; it pleased Him, first, by the value of the victim that was offered, and afterwards by the ardent zeal and heavenly dispositions of her, who offered herself, not as a simple victim, but as a holocaust, the characteristic of which is to leave nothing of itself. In her all was perfectly consumed by the fire of divine charity. O Virgin of virgins, obtain for us that we may imitate the perfection, the holiness, the perpetuity of thy sacrifice; obtain that we may give ourselves to Jesus Christ with thy dispositions, and that the fire of His love may burn and destroy in us all that is not of Him and for Him.

III. POINT.

“The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day” (Prov. IV, 18). These words applied to the just man, admirably express the progress of the pure Virgin during her abode in the temple; she grew still more in wisdom, in grace and in all the virtues, than in age. This universal and continual progress of Mary proceeded from two sources,—from heaven and from the earth; for, on the one hand, the Holy Ghost enlightened her interiorly, urged her by His divine motions, animated and directed her; on the other hand, she acted with all her strength, and according to all the power of the grace of God in her, in the highest and most perfect manner, seeking and doing in everything, what was most pleasing to God. Her life seemed exteriorly to be only ordinary, but was divine within, and accompanied by excellent and supernatural dispositions. The least action, performed through divine love, is more pleasing to God than the most heroic actions performed with coldness or indifference. Hence the Blessed Virgin, hidden in the temple, obeying the priests, laboring with her hands, keeping silence, or conversing with humble meekness, merited more than all the saints, more than the apostles, even when they were laboring at the conversion of the world. This humble Virgin was an earthly paradise, which God had planted by His power, which He cultivated and adorned by His spirit, purifying her, elevating her, and perfecting her, to make her an abode worthy of the second Adam; so that the treasures of her merits were constantly multiplying, her love inflaming her more and more, and her graces growing and increasing unceasingly, till the completion which was to crown them by the coming of the Son of

God, the object of her longing and of her continual prayers. O Blessed Virgin, obtain for us that we may imitate thee in thy fidelity to grace; and, since he who does not advance goes back, make us walk with constant fervor, to attain the prize of thy course and the end of our vocation, which is Jesus Christ, thy Son, and our Lord in His glory.

MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

First Friday in July.

Obedience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Obedience of the Heart of Jesus during His mortal life.

“I came down from heaven”, says our divine Saviour, “not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John VI, 38). True to His mission, our Lord never contradicted in any thing the wishes of His heavenly Father, even when manifested by the scribes and pharisees, of whom He said: “The scribes and pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do” (Mat. XXIII, 2, 3). At Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth He had no will of His own, but He unreservedly submitted to Mary and Joseph in all things, considering the will of God in their commands, as the prophet foretold: “The Lord God hath opened My ear, and I do not resist” (Is. L, 5); so that the evangelist could resume the thirty years of His life before His ministry in these few words: “He was subject to them” (Luke II, 51). Thus He wished to cure us of the feverish longing for unrestrained freedom, and impart to our indocile heart the thirst for submission, which consumed His heart, and which is so necessary for the cure of our souls.—In the course of His

ministry He declared: "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as redemption for many" (Mat. XX, 28). Although burning with an unspeakable zeal for the salvation of souls, He preached only in Judea and Galilee, because, having been sent by His Father only for the lost sheep of Israel, He did not wish to deviate in the least from His mission. When about to commence His Passion, He said: "That the world may know, that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I" (John XIV, 31); then, to show His obedience, He added: "Arise, let us go hence." And whither was He going? Not to glory, nor to pleasure, but whither obedience called Him, that is, to disgrace, to suffering and to death. He showed no hesitation; He allowed Himself to be bound, to be led from tribunal to tribunal. Submissive to His judges, to His persecutors, to His very executioners, He offered His sacred face to be spit upon, His cheeks to be buffeted, His body to be fearfully scourged, His sacred head to be crowned with thorns, and His heart never ceased repeating: "Father, not My will, but Thine be done." In these dispositions He ascended Calvary, allowed Himself to be stripped, crucified and raised on the cross, and His last words are a cry of abandonment to the will of His heavenly Father.—O Jesus, who will tell us how much Thy obedience benefited us, and how much ours will be worth to us? A single act of this virtue is capable of raising us to the most solid perfection. Grant me, then, the grace henceforth to obey all who hold Thy place towards me, promptly and perfectly, without murmur or complaint or wilful reluctance.

II. POINT.

Obedience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist.

The love of Jesus for the virtue of obedience seems to have impelled Him to institute the Blessed Sacrament, that He may therein continue to practise obedience. Indeed, even after His resurrection He delights in submitting to the will of another. "He, the King of heaven", says St. Alphonsus, "descends upon earth at the voice of a man, allows Himself to be placed where he wishes, to be exposed in the ostensorium or enclosed in the ciborium. He allows Himself to be carried about through the streets, into the houses, to be given in holy Communion to the just and even to sinners. He obeys as many persons as there are priests in the world, and this to the consummation of ages." He even obeys such priests as are unfaithful to their duty; and, shall we say it, He has suffered Himself to be cast into the mire or trampled upon by impious and sacrilegious men! O prodigy of the subjection of a God! "What wonder", says the Imitation, "if you, who are dust and ashes, submit to man for God's sake, when the Almighty who created the universe from nothing, humbly subjects Himself to His creatures! Learn, then, vile dust, to obey, to break your will and not refuse submission to authority." In the morning, at the hour of rising, say to yourself, "This is the call of the great King", and obey at once. Act in the same manner when you become acquainted with your superior's will. Always shrink from preferring your blind and depraved will to that of the Lord, who is wisdom and holiness itself.—O Jesus, divine Model of obedience, enable me to understand how meet it is for me, a vile slave, to submit to Thy representatives on earth, since Thou, who art infinite Grandeur, dost obey Thy own creatures in our

churches. Through the intercession of Thy Blessed Mother, help me always to consider Thee in those who hold their authority from Thee, and to obey them promptly, punctually and generously even in those things that are most opposed to my views and inclinations.

First Friday in August.

Humility of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Interior humility of Jesus.

God is the infinite Being, and we are only nothingness; by His essence He is holy and perfect, whilst we can be so only by means of grace. No one understood this better than our Saviour, for, uniting in His divine person both the divine and human natures, He perceived the infinite superiority of the divine nature over the human. Hence followed the profound humiliation of His Sacred Heart in the divine presence; hence also the unreserved subjection of all His thoughts, of all His desires, of all His affections. Being united to the Person of the Word, Christ's human nature had no subsistence of its own, but was governed in every thing by the divine Person, by which it was enlightened, directed, sanctified and rendered impeccable. One of the great effects of humility is to cause us to depend on the operations of grace. Hence the humility of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was perfect and incomprehensible. Having taken our iniquities upon Himself, the malice of which He well knew, He must have experienced a deep shame! The saints, during their life, are wont to be full of confusion and to call themselves great sinners because of their light faults. What, then, must Jesus Christ have experienced, He who is the Holy of holies,

at the sight of the great wickedness of sinners, for whom He was surety before God! What a humiliation for Him to see Himself so covered with the sins of all mankind in presence of the infinite justice and holiness of His heavenly Father! The humiliations of the saints and their unfavorable opinion of themselves are, then, nothing in comparison with the humble sentiments of the Man-God, which impelled Him to say, in order to render homage to the truth: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. II, 29).—O Lord Jesus, from Thee I wish to learn to humble myself before God, to acknowledge in His presence my helplessness, my impotence in doing good, to confess my sins which call down fearful punishments on me. I wish especially to learn from Thee to bear slights, contradiction, derision, insults and contempt with meekness and resignation. Form my heart on the pattern of Thine, and render it humble, patient, full of confidence in Thy help and of desire to glorify in all things the heavenly Father, even at the expense of my reputation.

II. POINT.

How to imitate the Saviour's humility.

If we wish to possess a humility that is sincere and conformable to that of Jesus, we should, first, be filled with the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Let us often at prayer say from our heart: God, by His essence, is Wisdom, Power, Majesty, Wealth and Holiness itself; and I am ignorance, weakness, vileness, poverty and corruption; of myself I am capable of committing the greatest crimes, and am deserving of the most dreadful punishment; even hell itself would not suffice to punish my ingratitude. The many graces I received from God have not rid me of my misery and wretchedness; what

would become of me, if I were left to myself and my foolish passions? My sins would be beyond computation, and I would be liable to multiply them without end. And, after this, I dare to esteem myself, to be puffed up with pride when I am praised, and to be irritated when I am blamed, and to attribute to myself all that God does for me, in me, and through me. O shameful blindness, which should cover me with confusion! And yet I offend God, I resist Him, I rob Him of His glory; what an incomprehensible conduct!—O Jesus, who will give my eyes a fountain of tears to weep over my faults of presumption, of vanity, of self-esteem and self-sufficiency? Grant that I may know Thy greatness and Thy adorable perfections. Impart to me some of the humility, which induced Thy Heart to embrace all kinds of opprobrium and contempt. Inspire me with courage to receive calmly, and even gratefully, affronts and all that wounds my self-love, for I should consider it a favor to receive help to cure my pride and my vain pretension.—O Mary, by the humble Heart of Thy amiable Son, obtain for me the strength to turn all the humiliations I receive into humility, as St. Bernard expresses it. Help me to accept in silence and with resignation all that wounds my feelings, and may my ambition be, according to the saying of St. Alphonsus, to surpass others in humility.

First Friday in September.

The Suffering Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Sorrow of the Heart of Jesus.

Our Lord did not, indeed, feel the blow of the soldier's lance; nevertheless the wound of His Heart naturally recalls to us His interior sufferings. The first

Adam enjoyed for some time the delights of the earthly paradise; but the second, who is our Saviour, had not a single moment of rest here below. He suffered in His Heart, even before His birth, the torments of His Passion and death. He foresaw Himself arrested, bound, buffeted, led from tribunal to tribunal, and everywhere the object of hatred, contempt and ill-treatment. How painful is it not for us to be threatened as to our honor, goods, health or life! This will enable us to judge of Christ's anticipated anguish. But the sight of our iniquities was still more cruel to His divine Heart. He knew every one of the innumerable sins already committed since the beginning of the world and that would be committed to the end of the world. He knew their deformity, their malice, their immense harm, and especially the outrages inflicted by them on the divine glory and majesty; He saw the loss of countless souls as their eternal consequence. What an overwhelming sight!—Thy Heart, O Jesus, experienced therefrom a pain more bitter than all those that ever did or will afflict mankind.—The Heart of Jesus is represented as pierced with a deep wound; what sword of repentance should transpierce us, especially when we behold our sweet Redeemer sweating blood in the Garden of olives, as an effect of His interior torments! How then, asks St. John Chrysostom, should we after this be grieved at any thing but sin, for it is the source of all evils; it ruined millions of angels, corrupted our race, and has these six thousand years drawn upon men all kinds of calamities, and daily yet condemns a number of immortal souls to endless torments. Sin, moreover, as St. Paul tells us, crucifies anew the only-begotten Son of God!—O my adorable Master, inspire me with horror for every sin, at the thought of Thy

sufferings renewed by my ingratitude towards Thee. Impress deeply in me the remembrance of Thy Passion, and especially of the interior pains of Thy Sacred Heart. May I weep over my sins with tears of repentance and love; purify me by Thy blood from all that in me is not conformable to Thy good pleasure.

II. POINT.

Our duties towards Jesus afflicted.

Who is more deserving of compassion than a father outraged by his own children, the Creator by His own creatures? Nevertheless our Saviour complains of having sought a consoler, and of not having found any. Let us compassionate Him in His sufferings, as He has had compassion on us. No pain afflicts us, which the Heart of Jesus has not endured before us by a loving prevision. Even our most hidden afflictions have passed through His divine Heart, which felt their bitterness. If a God, then, is so good as to compassionate the sufferings of vile sinners like ourselves, how can we remain indifferent to the pains He endured for our salvation! Our first duty towards Jesus suffering is to meditate on His sorrows with a tender and compassionate devotion. Our second duty consists in suffering patiently with Him. If the vilest of men had, of his own accord, assumed for us the punishment we deserved, would we not be inclined to take upon us at least some small portion of his sufferings? But Christ, our loving Redeemer, underwent, in our stead, the most cruel of martyrdoms, a martyrdom which lasted all His life. Can we, for a single moment, hesitate to embrace our daily cross, which He places on our shoulders, and invites us to carry with Him for His sake? O my Jesus, I accept beforehand all those providential crosses which tend to destroy my self-will and my selfishness, that I

may be intimately united to Thee. The saints understood this great duty towards Jesus suffering, for, not content with enduring afflictions without complaint, they crucified themselves in order to better resemble their divine Master. After their example, let us often compassionate the Redeemer's pains and suffer patiently with Him. For this purpose let us, first, at least by our prayers, relieve Jesus Himself in the person of the poor, the sick, the agonizing, the afflicted in mind or heart, and especially the souls in purgatory, so greatly deserving of our sympathy. Secondly, let us accept all the contradictions and bitterness we may meet with, with the intention of pleasing the Heart of Jesus, and consoling it by our resignation.—O Mary, Mother of sorrows, teach me thyself this two-fold means of sharing in the anguish of thy divine Son. Make me compassionate towards Jesus in those that suffer; make me patient and submissive, for His sake, in all the trials of this life.

First Friday in October.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a Sanctuary.

I. POINT.

The Heart of Jesus, the richest of sanctuaries.

If every soul in the state of grace is a living palace of God and a temple of the Holy Ghost, how much more so is the Heart of the very Author of grace, of the Redeemer of mankind! In His Sacred Heart the eternal Father is well pleased, the sanctifying Spirit dwells in it substantially, and collects in it all the wealth of which He is the treasurer. In it, according to the prophet, reposes the spirit of wisdom and knowledge, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of science and piety; and the spirit of the fear of the Lord fills it entirely (Is. XI, 2, 3). Christ possesses, then, in the

highest degree the gifts of the Holy Ghost, all privileges and all perfections, divine and human, in a word, the fulness of all the wealth of the Creator of the universe: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the divinity" (Col. II, 9). Let us enter into this adorable Heart through faith, confidence and love. "There", says St. Thomas of Villanova, "the Church, like the turtle-dove, has made her nest; there she conceals her children, the faithful, to shelter them from storms, until the day when, spreading their wings, they will put on immortality." O happy sanctuary, where so many saints have found their delight! O august oratory, adorned by the Lord's power, wisdom and holiness! How happy were the great servants of God to dwell therein! St. Francis de Sales constantly dwelt in it, and not even the most distracting occupation could interrupt his repose therein. Jesus Himself ordered St. Mechtildis to honor and love His Sacred Heart in the Blessed Eucharist, and to take refuge in it during life and at death. She asserted having since then obtained thereby the greatest graces. Were we to know the treasures of merit, mercy and love enclosed in that adorable Heart, with what ardor and confidence our soul would hasten to establish her dwelling therein! She would never seek from creatures what is so abundantly found in the Heart of the Man-God,—light and holy joy amid sadness and troubles, courage and energy against temptations, trials and obstacles to salvation.—Let us say with St. Bernard: "How sweet and pleasant it is to dwell in the Sacred Heart, and to seek in it true goods and the only lasting consolations!" Henceforth, O my Saviour, when dissipation, the pressure of business, the distractions of the world will oblige me to go away from Thee, I will take refuge in the sanctuary, or oratory, of Thy Heart,

to find therein peace, recollection and the spirit of prayer.

II. POINT.

The soul's occupations in the Heart of Jesus.

“The Heart of Jesus”, says St. Thomas, “is a temple built by the Holy Ghost, sanctified by the Deity, and consecrated to eternal love.” What is done in a temple, or church? In it people recollect themselves, pray and offer sacrifice. What oratory better calculated than the Heart of Jesus, to induce us to think of God, and humbly to pray to Him? There the three divine Persons are more specially present than anywhere else on earth; thence rise incessant supplications in favor of mankind redeemed. Jesus Christ, who prayed so much during His life at Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth, who, notwithstanding the hardships of His ministry, was wont to spend the nights in prayer, continues after His resurrection, says St. Paul, to intercede in our favor (Hebr. VII, 25). His Heart is permanently disposed to pray, in order to adore, appease, and thank His heavenly Father in our name, and to obtain sanctifying graces for all. Let us unite ourselves to this Sacred Heart, and with it offer our homage to the heavenly Father, unceasingly beseeching Him to show us mercy because of the merits of His Son. But Jesus does not content Himself with merely praying in the sanctuary of His Heart; He also offers Himself in sacrifice. A perpetual Victim of the glory of His Father and of man’s salvation, the Saviour sacrifices Himself on thousands of altars, and remains day and night always immolated in our tabernacles. What an example for us! Since we justly belong to God, who has made us, should we not be always ready to obey Him and to submit to His will? But instead of this, we are

ingenious in shirking every thing difficult, in shunning every mortification, in seeking our gratification, even at the expense of our spiritual progress.—O my God, for the love of Jesus and Mary, impart to me the spirit of prayer and self-denial, so that, united to Thee by prayer, I may become pliant and docile in Thy service, notwithstanding the disgust and repugnance of my proud and sensual nature. Enable me constantly to draw from the Heart of Thy divine Son what is wanting to render my heart a sanctuary truly worthy of Thy divine complacency, and wholly consecrated to render Thee my homages even at the cost of the most painful sacrifices.

First Friday in November.

Continual Prayer of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Continual Prayer of the Heart of Jesus.

From the first moment of His incarnation until the day when His Heart ceased to beat on the cross, Jesus never interrupted His prayer, not even during His sleep. Substantially united to the eternal Word, His holy humanity was inseparable from it; hence proceeded His constant recollection and uninterrupted prayer. Seeing how ungrateful men generally ignored, forgot or disdained the infinite majesty of His Father, He repaired those outrages by abasing Himself before the divine Being, offering His homages of adoration. What a glory to the Deity! A single sigh of Jesus was more honorable to the heavenly Father than all the praises of the blessed spirits. And with what love His tender Heart then burned! The seraphim were as icy-cold near that intense furnace of love. From it escaped fervent acts which supplied for our coldness, repaired

all our offences and our cowardice, and began to kindle on earth the sacred fire which He was to perpetuate and increase by the adorable Eucharist.—O Jesus, it was Thy Heart also that obtained for us, by an uninterrupted prayer, so many graces, as the vocation to the true faith, the call to repentance, the forgiveness of sins committed, perseverance in virtue, progress in perfection. Oh, how powerful and efficacious our prayers would be, if they were always conformable to those of Thy divine Heart, so full of ardor and charity! Let us resolve to unite ourselves in our meditations to the holy dispositions of our Lord, and to ask of the heavenly Father, in union with Christ, all the graces necessary for mankind, especially for our soul, the most wretched of all, so that we may, through His merits, obtain a lively faith to direct all our actions, a childlike abandonment to divine Providence, and, lastly, the gift of constant prayer, so that we may always walk in the divine presence closely united to God.

II. POINT.

How we should pray in imitation of the Heart of Jesus.

Who will describe to us the incomprehensible humility which accompanied the prayers of the Heart of Jesus? Annihilated, as it were, before the infinite Majesty, He abased Himself on account of our weaknesses, miseries and sins, which He had assumed. How, then, can we, after this, pray with so little reverence and attention, as if we were speaking to an inferior or to an equal? Are we not, of ourselves, only vile nothingness, slaves of death and hell? “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (James IV, 6). “To whom shall I have respect,” says God, “but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit?” (Is. LXVI, 2). On the other hand: “The

prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds; . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Eccli. XXXV, 21). Hence true humility, full of strength and power, superabounds in confidence. The more the saints esteemed themselves wretched, the more firm was their hope in God. The Lord, rich in every good and never growing poor, is most eager to give. God, by His nature and the fulness of all graces, seeks an empty heart to pour them in. Such a heart is the heart only of the humble man, relying not on his own merits, but solely on the divine mercy; this is true confidence, that which, as it were, does violence to the heart of God. From this humility full of confidence proceeds perseverance, a quality which causes us to pray earnestly, and that during our whole life. Happy the soul that constantly has recourse to God, without ever growing weary of aridity, disgust and temptations! The mere assiduity of such a prayer, says St. John Climacus, is a singular favor, for it renders us similar to the Sacred Heart, which ceased praying only when it ceased to live. O how desirable a grace is constancy in prayer! Heart of Jesus, ardent furnace of divine love, inflame me with a holy fervor, that I may pray without ceasing, even amid my occupations. I propose doing so with sentiments of humility, compunction, respect, and with profound recollection, also with childlike confidence, and an earnest persistence. For, O Jesus, if, as St. Alphonsus says, Thy Heart is the source and ocean of grace, and Mary, Thy Mother, is its channel, the means to draw it in abundance can be only an humble, confident and persevering prayer

MEDITATIONS
FOR THE FEAST AND OCTAVE OF
ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.*)

January 29 to February 6.

Feast of St. Francis de Sales, January 29.

His zeal and conformity with our Lord.

I. POINT.

“The Lord hath called me from the womb of my mother; . . . He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He hath protected me, and hath made me as a chosen arrow, . . . and He said to me: Thou art My servant Israel, for in thee will I glory.”
(Is. XLIX, 1, 2, 3.)

If the Lord glorified Himself in our holy Doctor, rendering him the “chosen arrow” to accomplish the salvation of His people, let us admire the zeal with which our saint fulfilled this divine mission. According to my judgment, says St. Jane Frances de Chantal, it seems to me, that zeal for the salvation of souls was the predominant virtue in our Blessed Father; for, in a certain sense, it might be said, that he sometimes left the service of God, preferring that of the neighbor. Every one knows his incomparable charity for souls, and that it was his delight to labor for them: in this he was indefatigable, and never ceased until he had given them peace. As to penitent sinners, whose weakness

*) As there are nine meditations given here, they may serve as a novena preparatory to the feast of the saint.

he saw, what did he not do for them? He made himself a sinner with them and united his heart to that of his penitents. O my God, what tenderness, what sweetness, what meekness, what labor; he consumed himself, saying with the great apostle: I would have desired to become an anathema from Christ, for the salvation of my brethren (Rom. IX, 3). "O Lord, remember David and all his meekness; how he swore to the Lord, he vowed a vow to the God of Jacob: If I shall enter into the tabernacle of my house, if I shall go up into the bed wherein I lie; if I shall give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. . . . For Thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of Thine anointed" (Ps. CXXXI).

II. POINT.

"I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. II, 20). This great saying of St. Paul applies admirably to our glorious Doctor, who, says Fr. Caussin, "after having read, considered and practised the lives of all the saints, strove to imitate the Saint of saints; in this he succeeded so happily, that he bore in his times the most striking image of the intercourse of the Son of God with men; having in all things accustomed himself to His presence, and conformed himself to Him in all his actions."—But listen, above all, to the testimony of St. Frances de Chantal, who knew him so well: "Our Lord had forgotten nothing for the perfection of this work, which His powerful and merciful hand had formed for Himself. Was there ever seen a spirit so meek, so humble, so kind, so gracious, so affable as his? And with that, how great was the excellence and solidity of the prudence and wisdom, natural and supernatural, which God had poured into his mind, making

it the clearest, the brightest, the most universal that ever was seen!"—"He walked in the common way, but in a manner so divine and heavenly, that it seems to me nothing in his life was more admirable. O my God, shall I venture to say it; it seems to me simply that my Blessed Father was a living image, in which the Son of God, our Lord, was depicted, for truly the order and economy of his holy soul were entirely supernatural and divine. I am not alone in this opinion: many persons have told me, that when they saw this Blessed one, it seemed to them that they saw our Lord on earth."—"The Lord hath chosen Sion; He hath chosen it for His dwelling. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it." There I will show forth the strength of David, there "I have prepared a lamp for my anointed" (Ps. CXXXI, 13). O holy Doctor, light of the Church, Blessed Father, thou who didst so love the divine law, pray for us to the Son of God.

First Day of the Octave, January 30.

The Faith of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

"Abide in Me and I in you" (John XV, 4).

St. Francis accomplished this precept of the Divine Master with sublime perfection. Père la Rivière, his first panegyrist, says: This holy Bishop did all his works for God, according to God, in God, that is, in His presence; and this holy presence gave an indescribable splendor to his virtues, as the presence of the sun increases the lustre of the flowers; it rendered him fertile in good works. He received in the well prepared vessel of his amiable heart the measure of the heavenly blessings poured into it with admirable profusion; so that, without any resistance, his soul lovingly liquified

and allowed the good pleasure of God to act in him, just as soft wax or melted metal receives the impression of all stamps, and all characters that are applied to it. He was entirely absorbed in the light of faith; flesh and blood no longer revealed anything to him, only the spirit of the heavenly Father spoke to his ear and his heart, animated him, moved him and guided him. He did not do things because his reason told him they were virtues, but because Christian faith and charity inspired them. O great saint, obtain for us the grace to live like thee by faith, and to remain hidden in God with our Lord.

II. POINT.

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John XV, 5). St. Frances de Chantal speaks thus of the admirable fruits produced by the union of this prolific branch, the soul of our saint, with the Divine Stem. She says: “What gave this great meekness and equality to our Blessed Father? It was his attention to the divine presence, that made him receive everything with peace and tranquillity of heart; he accepted all things as if our Lord had looked upon him, and with His own hand had given them to him: so that when evil tidings were brought to him, he was not moved, because, being attentive to God, he could refuse nothing that was offered to him by His adorable hand. If he was blamed, wronged, or insulted, he bore all patiently, regarding all in God; afterwards he was seen with the same serenity of countenance, and the same tranquillity of heart.”—Glorious saint, obtain for us the grace to do, like thee, all for God, according to God, in God, receiving all from His hand; in order that with thee we also may receive the

effect of the great promise of the Divine Master: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you" (John XV, 7).

Second Day of the Octave, January 31.

The Hope of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

"Can a woman forget her infant? . . . And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold I have graven thee in my hands."

(Is. XLIX, 15, 16.)

Relying upon this divine promise, the only care of St. Francis was to allow himself to be governed by the eternal will, and to abandon himself entirely into the arms of God, casting the anchor of his hope in Him. St. Frances de Chantal says of him: "He reposed in divine Providence with more tranquillity than an only child in the bosom of its mother, declaring that our Lord had taught him this lesson from his youth, and that, if he could be born again, he would despise human prudence more than ever, and would allow himself to be wholly governed by Divine Providence. As to the affairs which he undertook and which God confided to him, he always directed them under the shelter of this sovereign government; and never was he more certain of the issue of an affair, nor more satisfied in the midst of risks, than when he had no other support. When, according to human prudence, he foresaw an impossibility in the execution of a design which God had committed to him, he was so firm in his confidence that nothing moved him, and therefore he lived without care or solicitude, repeating with the royal prophet: "The Lord is my rock, and my strength, and my

Saviour. God is my strong one, in Him will I trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, He lifteth me up, and is my refuge" (2 Kings XXII, 2, 3).

II. POINT.

"Mine eyes are always fixed on the Lord, for He will deliver my feet from the snares" (Ps. XXIV, 15). St. Francis will himself reveal to us the sweet thoughts of his heart upon this verse of the psalmist. He wrote to St. Frances de Chantal: "I was considering the other day, what some authors say of the halcyons, little birds which build in the midst of the waters. They make their nests quite round and so well pressed, that the sea water cannot penetrate: only in the upper part there is a small hole, through which they can breathe, and the air which is taken through it, serves as a counterweight, and so balances these little barques that they are never overturned. O my daughter, how I wish that our hearts could be like that nest, well pressed, well lined on all sides, so that if the storms and tempests of the world should attack them, they might not penetrate; and that there should be but one opening, on the side of heaven, to breathe and aspire to our Saviour. O how I love these little birds that are surrounded by water, and live only on air, hiding themselves in the ocean and seeing only heaven. And what pleases me most, is, that the anchor is cast above and not below, to strengthen them against the waves. O my sister, my daughter, may the sweet Jesus render us such, that the strengthening of our hopes may be always from above and in paradise."—Great saint, obtain for us, that with thee we may look up to God, and let Him act in us, that after thee we may repeat this prayer of the prophet: "Keep me as the apple of Thy eye; protect me under the shadow of Thy wings . . . and there will I hope" (Ps. XVI, 8; LVI, 2).

Third Day of the Octave, February 1.

The Charity of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

"Abide in My love" (John XV, 9).

The sublime commentary made by our glorious Doctor upon the great commandment of the Divine Master, being the perfect expression of the sentiments of his own heart for his Sovereign King, we penetrate the inmost depths of his soul, by this page from Theotimus: "The Lord demands all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength; and this great God, singularly good, has a right to desire our whole heart entirely, for we have a little heart, which cannot furnish sufficient love to love the Divine Goodness worthily: is it not suitable, then, that being unable to give Him all the love that is necessary, it should at least give Him all that it can? Ought not the Good that is sovereignly amiable, to be sovereignly loved?"

II. POINT.

"It is the true sign that we love God alone in all things, when we love Him equally in all things, since, being always equal to Himself, the inequality of our love for Him can originate only in the consideration of something which is not Himself. Now the sacred lover does not love her King more with all the universe, than if He were quite alone without the universe; because all that is outside of God and is not God, is to her as nothing. A soul all pure, that does not love even paradise, except because the Spouse is loved there; but a Spouse so sovereignly loved in His paradise, that if He had no paradise to give, He would not be less amiable, nor less loved by this courageous lover, who does not know how to love the paradise of her Spouse, but only

her Spouse of paradise: and who prizes Calvary whilst her Spouse is crucified there, no less than heaven where He is glorified.”—O Father full of love, couldst thou not repeat the glowing exclamation of the royal prophet: “What have I in heaven, and what do I desire upon earth save Thee, O my God! My heart and my flesh have fainted in Thee, O God of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. LXXII, 25, 26). Couldst thou not also exclaim with the great apostle: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. VIII, 35, 38, 39).

Fourth Day, February 2.

Love of St. Francis de Sales of the Divine Good Pleasure.

I. POINT.

“If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.”
(John XV, 10.)

How close, how profound must have been the union of our saint with the love of the Saviour, since his heart breathed forth unceasingly this loving sigh of the prophet: “O how have I loved Thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. CXVIII, 97). This angelic man, says Père la Rivière, having his eyes always fixed on the good pleasure of his Sovereign Master, went forward, stopped, drew back, advanced, thus obeying every sign he received from Him. It was not enough for him, not to displease his pure Love, he desired to please Him, and he strove to satisfy Him entirely. Had he known that he could please Him a little more by some other means, he would have un-

dertaken it, although it might have cost him his life. This sacred singer of the divine praises continued his melodious airs in the exercise of the virtues, in conformity with the rules which the Holy Ghost prescribed to him; it would have been impossible to remark in him the least discord, for everything was done by him in perfect harmony; and therefore the peaceful King of his affections delighted to listen to his melody of heavenly sweetness.

II. POINT.

“How sweet are Thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth” (Ps. CXVIII, 103). The words by which the Divine Master intimated His orders to our saint were as sweet to him as to the holy King David, so the holy bishop, as says Père la Rivière, was not troubled about anything that he did, provided that the majesty of his Master was served. His soul, like a beautiful standard emblazoned with the mottoes of the good pleasure of God, waved, unrolled, furled and unfurled, at the will of the breath of the Holy Spirit. The indifference of his angelic heart was admirable. He loved equally the sweet and the bitter, repose and suffering, life and death, so that he would not have chosen one of these things in preference to the other, unless the Eternal Majesty had made known to him His divine pleasure, for then he would have decided immediately. And all this was done peacefully and without reply, without contradiction in the superior part of his soul, without an “if”, without a “no”, without a “but”, without a “perhaps”. In the midst of disappointments his heart remained unmoved: fixing his eyes on the equity of the divine judgment, he attached himself to it lovingly, and humbly kissed the rods with which his Master wished to try him. What-

ever struggles he felt in the inferior part of his nature, in the superior part of his soul he always acquiesced sweetly in the adorable decrees of the Eternal Goodness, repeating, without ceasing, the great saying of the psalmist: "I have inclined my heart to observe Thy justifications" [Thy ordinances full of justice] (Ps. CXVIII, 112). Obtain for us, O holy Doctor, that with thee we may repeat the words of the Master: "Not my will", O Lord, "but Thine, be done" (Luke XXII, 42).

Fifth Day, February 3.

Love of St. Francis de Sales for his Neighbor.

I. POINT.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you."

(John XIII, 34.)

With what perfection did not our holy Doctor accomplish this new and dear commandment of the Divine Master! St. Frances de Chantal says: "Our holy Father was filled with a perfect, excellent and entire charity towards his neighbor. I assure you that he possessed this virtue in an eminent degree, and that he practised it faithfully and perfectly, to the very end of his life. He said of himself: 'It has pleased God to make my heart thus: I desire so much to love our dear neighbor, I desire to love him so much; yet it seems to me that I love nothing at all but God, and all souls for God, and that all that is not God, or for God, is to me nothing'."—"Our Blessed Father", continues the saint, "consumed and shortened his life through his charity and in the consolation of his neighbor; for he often neglected to eat, to drink and to sleep for his neighbor's sake; he endured labors and inconveniences, insupport-

able to any other, saying that we must never refuse our neighbor the good that we can procure for him. When it was represented to him, that he could not last long under this great labor, and that he would injure his health, he answered gently, that 'ten years more or less of life were nothing'."—O great saint, how truly couldst thou repeat, with the apostle: "To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I became all things to all men, that I might save all" (1 Cor. IX, 22).

II. POINT.

"Charity is patient, is kind; beareth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. XIII, 4). St. Frances de Chantal will show us also, with what sweet fidelity our saint reproduced this picture of the eternal virtue, traced by St. Paul. She said: "Never did our Blessed Father refuse himself to any one at any hour; however important was the affair in which he was engaged, he never dismissed those who came to see him, nor did he show any weariness or disgust for their conversation; and when he was censured for his great affability, which made him lose time with persons of little consideration and for things of little importance, he would answer gently: These little people whom you deem unworthy of consideration, need as much to be listened to and assisted in their affairs, as the great in theirs. If a soul is as much troubled by a mere nothing as another would be by a great matter, must we therefore neglect to relieve her and to send her away satisfied?"—"If he was among his inferiors," says Père la Rivière, "O my Jesus, how readily he accommodated himself to their will, as far as reason permitted; how he yielded to their opinions; how he bent to their humors, however rough, however surly or difficult, without delay, without reply, without bitterness, for the love of Him, who for love of

us became obedient even to the death of the Cross.”—O amiable Doctor, how justly couldst thou say, after thy Divine Master: “As My Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you” (John XV, 9).

Sixth Day, February 4.

The Humility and Meekness of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

“Learn of Me, that I am meek and humble of heart.”

(Mat. XI, 29.)

If our glorious saint reproduced, in an excellent manner, all the features of his Divine Model, he surpassed himself in the perfection with which he practised this great lesson of the Master, meekness and humility. “These two virtues”, says Père la Rivière, “were the two dear darlings of his heart, which he nourished and cultivated from his tender youth with extreme care, and by the reception of holy Communion.”—“Our holy Father”, adds St. Frances de Chantal, “was perfectly humble, not that he used gestures or words of humility, except very rarely, and when dictated by his heart, for he spoke very little of himself and of what belonged to him, and he said that we must not speak of self, either for good or for evil; and that self-praise and self-blame spring from the same root of vanity. His humility was cordial, noble, true and solid, rendering him entirely indifferent to honor or contempt. He had a very low opinion of himself; he loved contempt and his own abjection, and held its practice in great esteem. He told me once, that he had labored three whole years to acquire this virtue, which he loved more than any other. His method was to keep himself very humble, very little and very low before God, with singular reverence and confidence, as a child of love.”—O glorious Father,

obtain for us all hearts meek and humble, truly formed according to the Heart of God, that with thee they may reap abundantly the fruit of the Saviour's promise: "And you shall find peace to your souls" (Mat. XI, 29).

II. POINT.

"Behold My elect: My soul delighteth in him; I have given My spirit upon him. He shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax" (Is. XLII, 1, 3). These words pronounced by the prophet concerning our Divine Saviour may, with all the limits of the most profound respect to His infinite Majesty, be applied to this true servant of His heart, very meek and very humble, of whom it could be said: "He had made a resolution to please every one, that he might better please the unique Heart of His unique Jesus." "It is not possible", adds Père la Rivière, "to express how cordially and affably he associated with every one, however poor and needy. He counseled and consoled indifferently all who appealed to him; he visited the miserable and those who, in their maladies, were destitute of human aid, and he despised no one. He generally caressed more persons who were homely, uncouth and awkward, because in them he saw only God."—"Some", continues Père la Rivière, "imagined that this estimable quality of meekness was natural to this amiable prelate. But they will pardon me, if I say, on the contrary, that his natural disposition was like that of his race, strongly inclined to anger. He, therefore, gained the victory over his fiery passion by force of arms, striving continually to conquer himself with the aid of divine grace." O most sweet saint, obtain for us that, like thee, we may find the honeycomb in the wounds of the Lion of the tribe of Juda, having, after thy example, torn to pieces the passions and inclinations

of our hearts; then we shall enjoy the loving promise of the Divine Master: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Mat. V, 4).

Seventh Day, February 5.

Strength of Soul of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

"I have found David My servant: with My holy oil I have anointed him; for My hand shall help him and My arm shall strengthen him."

(Ps. LXXXVIII, 21.)

St. Frances de Chantal declares that, like the holy King David, our glorious saint, sustained by the divine hand, strengthened by the Almighty's arm, was the boldest, the most generous and most powerful soul in bearing burdens and hardships, and in carrying on the enterprises which God inspired him to undertake; he never drew back, and he said that, when our Lord commits an affair to us, we must not abandon it, but must have courage to conquer all difficulties. She adds: "Certainly, it required great strength of mind to persevere in good as our saint did. Who ever saw him disturbed or lose his tranquillity? Who ever saw his patience shaken, or his soul moved against any one? And yet our saint was not exempt from the feelings and emotions of the passions, and he did not wish us to desire to be freed from them; he, however, paid no attention to them, except to check them, taking delight in this. He declared, moreover, that they enable us to practise most excellent virtues and to establish them firmly in our soul: but it is true, that he had such absolute control over his passions, that they obeyed him as slaves, and, towards the end of his life, he appeared to have none."—"This holy prelate", says Père la

Rivière, "did not follow his natural inclinations; they never presented themselves to him without his opposing them firmly, and finally overcoming them. Holy Scripture mentions, as a signal miracle, that the river Jordan stopped its course and flowed back towards its original source, but I declare and I will not retract, that it is a greater miracle to see our holy prelate not only not in any way yielding to his inferior appetites, but even acting contrary to them simply to please the Creator."

II. POINT.

"Behold My servant . . . My elect . . . I have given My spirit upon him. He shall not cry, . . . neither shall his voice be heard abroad. . . . He shall not be sad, nor troublesome" (Is. XLII, 1, 2, 4). "The waters of Siloe", says Père la Rivière, "according to Holy Scripture, flowed silently, that is, so imperceptibly, that scarcely could the least motion be perceived; in like manner, the conformity of our holy bishop to the good pleasure of God, by the way of indifference, was practised so gently and cheerfully, that not the least emotion or excitement of the heart could ever be observed in him. How could there be in his heart any collision of the waves, since his rational appetite was destroyed, lost, absorbed, plunged and converted into the pure will of God! All in him was profound peace, the God of peace making his abode in his heart: he no longer had any will, but permitted God to will in him and for him. Being often in the fire of contradiction, opposition and persecution, our prudent prelate always preserved his peace, his heart remained calm, and never did he yield to anger or excitement. His will was firm, constant, loyal, and immovable in the good work he had begun; it resembled a rock in the midst of the sea, which is not shaken by anything, and against which the

waves and foaming billows dash, and are broken.”—O great saint, may we imitate thee, and repeat with thee the words of the prophet: “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength: the Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer; my God is my helper, . . . my protector, and the horn of my salvation” (Ps. XVII, 1, 2, 3).

Eighth Day, February 6.

The Simplicity and Purity of Heart of St. Francis de Sales.

I. POINT.

“How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart.” (Ps. LXXII, 1.)

An upright heart, endowed with heavenly simplicity, was the blessed portion of St. Francis; therefore the divine Goodness was pleased to load him with the abundance proclaimed by the prophet. Père la Rivière tells us that the sunflower has this characteristic, that, wherever it may be planted, it always turns towards the sun, as if to see it, and be seen by it; thus this devout prelate, wherever he was, fixed his spiritual eyes upon the incomprehensible Majesty of the Most Adorable Trinity, offering himself as a sacrifice of praise: and, as the children of Israel, journeying through the desert of Sin, had always in their camp the place of prayer, because they carried everywhere with them the Mosaic Tabernacle, so this pious bishop carried with him his oratory, as he had made his interior a chapel, in which to celebrate the divine offices. He raised his spirit to sublime aspirations, his exercises were always directed to sacred objects and subjects; for all he did was either something sacred, or was rendered so by his holy intention; he spiritualized everything and thus converted earth into heaven. When he could close his door upon himself, and recollect himself without any disturbance,

he offered himself to his only Love, placing in the presence of God, his only Love, his soul, from whose depths he sent forth one single and only thought, the thought of pleasing Him. As in the primitive Church the Blessed Sacrament was kept in golden doves, so our holy bishop took pains to render his soul dove-like, that he might suitably lodge the "Only Dove of the only dove" (*l'Unique Colombeau de l'unique colombe*).—O most amiable saint, vouchsafe to hear the aspiration of thy servants, who address to thee that of the prophet: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly, and be at rest?" (Ps. LIV, 7). May Thy altars, O Lord, my King and my God, be forever the place of my repose (Ps. LXXXIII, 4).

II. POINT.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Mat. V, 8). The pure eye of St. Frances de Chantal could appreciate, better than any other, the angelic purity of heart of our glorious saint, and the clear light by which he penetrated the divine secrets; therefore she speaks of them in these magnificent terms: "O Jesus, how admirable was the order which God had established in this holy soul; all was so well arranged, so calm, and the light of God so clear that he perceived even the least of His motions: and he had so penetrating an insight into what regarded the spirit, that he discovered it in things the most delicate and refined; and never did this pure soul permit voluntarily what he believed to be less perfect; for his love, full of zeal, would not suffer it; not that he did not commit some imperfections, but they were through surprise and infirmity. I have never known him to attach his heart to a single thing, however small it might be: on the contrary, his soul was purer than the sun and whiter

than the snow in his actions and his resolutions. In short, in his designs and affections there was only purity, humility, simplicity and union of spirit with God: therefore it was admirable to hear him speak of God and perfection: he used terms so precise and intelligible, that the most delicate and exalted points of the spiritual life were easily understood. God had poured into the centre of this holy soul a light so clear, that he saw with a single glance the truths of faith and their excellence; this produced great fervor, ecstasies and raptures of the will. He called the place, where these lights were received, the Sanctuary of God, into which nothing enters but the soul alone with its God; this was the place of his retreat and his ordinary abode." O glorious saint, inflamed with divine love, turn thine eyes towards thy devoted servants; cause a divine ray to shine upon them, that they also may see God everywhere, and go to Him from everything; that with thee they may plunge themselves into the Eternal Light and see and enjoy their heavenly Spouse in Sion.



GIRARDEY, Ferreol.

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